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Saturday December 23 1995

Abu Dhabi D 8.50 Albania L 220 Andorra FF 10 Austria AS 28 Bahrain BD 0.80 Belgium BF 50 Bulgaria L 170 Croatia KN 12.50 Cyprus CE 0.90 Czech Republic KC45 Denmark DK 14 Dubai D 8.50 Egypt EE 5 Estonia K 30 Finland FM 11 France FF 10 Germany DM 3.50 Greece D 350 Hong Kong HK$ 23 Hungary F 185 Iceland IK 185 India Rs 65 Israel NIS 8.90 Italy L 2,800 Jordan JD 1.00 Kuwait KD 0.50 Latvia US$ 2 Lebanon US$ 1.50 Lithuania US$ 2 Luxembourg LF 55 Madeira E 250 Malta Ml. 0.43 Morocco D 15 Netherlands G 3.75 Norway NK 15 Oman OR 1.00 Pakistan R 70 Poland Z 5.70 Portugal E 230 Qatar QR 8.50 Russia US$ 2.00 Saudi Arabia R 10 Slovakia SK 55 Slovenia SLT 260 Spain P 200 Sweden SK 15 Switzerland SF 3 Thailand B 80 Tunisia TD 1.750 Turkey TL 100.000 Ukraine US$ 2.00 USA US$ 2.75

The Guardian

INTERNATIONAL

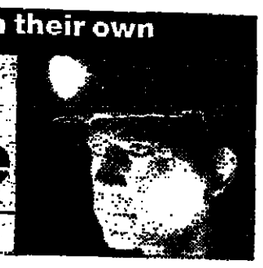
NEWSPAPER OF THE YEAR

Printed in London, Manchester, Frankfurt and Roubaix

48,432

The Welsh miners who made it on their own

The pit that refused to die



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Sport

Soccer on collision course with Europe

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Interview with Lord Young of Dartington

Re-inventing the family

Outlook page 17

Ban on smoking to be enforced

Voluntary scheme seen as a failure

Paul Brown
Environment Correspondent

THE Government is considering legislation to control smoking in all buildings open for public use, including pubs and restaurants, because a voluntary scheme started three years ago has failed.

The Department of the Environment believes that non-smokers should have at least some areas in all public places free of cigarette smoke to protect health, and is prepared to impose smoke-free zones.

A target it set in 1992 as one of its promises in the environment white paper to have an effective smoking policy in 80 per cent of public places within two years has not been met in any of the categories of public buildings, including hospitals.

A report due to be published by the department next month — obtained in advance by the Guardian — shows the extent of the failure. Pubs are the worst offenders, with only 14 per cent having an effective smoking policy, and restaurants come next, with 36 per cent.

Licensed victuallers and restaurateurs who have been trying to encourage colleagues to co-operate with the Government to avoid legislation said yesterday they were appalled at what they believed would be the effect on trade of a smoking ban.

The Department of the Environment said the commitment to legislation had been made in 1992 if voluntary measures could not be made to work, and clearly they had not.

The 1992 statement said: "While the voluntary approach has many advantages, the Government will, if necessary, consider statutory means of protecting non-smoking members of the public and introduce appropriate enabling legislation."

A department spokesman said yesterday: "Clearly the voluntary approach has not worked, so we must honour our pledge."

The figures show that 77 per cent of schools managed to protect non-smokers from passive smoking, but only 71 per cent of health establishments. Only 63 per cent of shops managed to do so.

An effective policy as defined by the department means that there is a smoke-free area for public use. This does not mean simply designating tables in pubs and restaurants as non-smoking, but requires walled-off areas and strategically placed extractor fans in smoking areas to prevent fumes from drifting.

There have been substantial improvements as a result of the department's campaign in several categories, particularly in buses, trains, banks and other "money advice centres".

David Harrold, chief executive of the Restaurateurs Association, said: "A complete ban on smoking would be an absolute nightmare for the industry, with thousands of establishments going out of business.

"The idea will be regarded with abject horror by our members. We have been advocating non-smoking areas with proper expert advice on ventilation — but stopping smoking altogether would be a disaster."

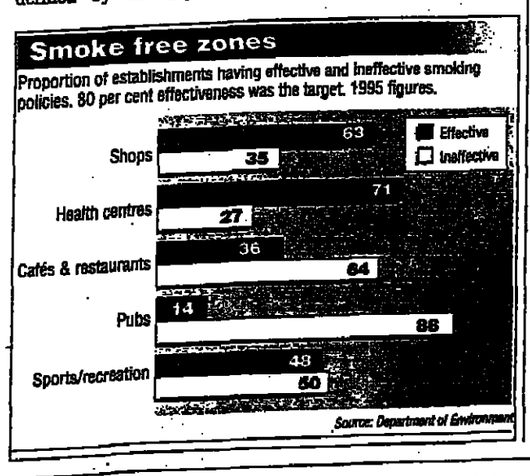
Publicans also reacted with alarm. Mike Lenveson, chairman of the parliamentary committee of the Licensed Victuallers' Association, said: "This would have terrible repercussions on an already embattled industry. Many smaller pubs knocked into one room by the brewers just could not manage non-smoking areas. It would kill the trade."

He said the mood was changing in restaurants. In his pub in Chorley, Lancashire, there is a non-smoking room in the restaurant area, but the smoking section fills up first.

"However, attitudes have changed. Smokers realise they have an unacceptable habit and it is polite to ask permission before lighting up — that would not have happened 10 years ago."

However, Steven Droppa, head waiter at the Gay Hussar in London, said: "Yes please, a ban now. With 30 customers smoking at table after dinner I can hardly breathe and it keeps me up coughing all night. I would be most grateful for a government ban."

In the United States, where some smoking bans in public areas have been imposed, predictions of financial disaster for restaurants have been misplaced. In New York, a total ban has led to the establishment of "cigar clubs" where everyone smokes, and of restaurants which only admit smokers.



Residents of Sarajevo, a city where everything has been in short supply for 45 months, jostle for Christmas gifts handed out by Icelandic volunteers PHOTOGRAPH CHRIS HELGREN

Weary Bosnians rehearse role of grateful recipient

Eyewitness

Julian Borger in Sarajevo

SANTA is surrounded — Sarajevo is at peace and the secular saint has flown in from Iceland to shower gifts on a largely Muslim city. But in Bosnia, the rate of exchange between giving and gratitude is never certain.

A crowd has gathered in a snow-covered Sarajevo park, encircling Santa Claus, a bespectacled Icelander called Throstur Karlsson from a Reykjavik peace institute.

Men and women hold aloft babies and children as Mr Karlsson reaches deep into his sack and pulls out a cluster of gift-wrapped presents.

Pushing and shoving starts almost immediately — first among television cameramen, and then among Sarajevans.

It is not aggressive, but every mother is anxious lest her child be disappointed. They all live in a city where most things have been in short supply for 45 months.

The crisp snow is soon churned into grey slush, but the scuffle is over before blood is spilt. Nevertheless, Santa's sister, Harpa Karlsdottir, is disappointed.

"I never thought there would be fighting," she said before boarding a bus to the airport a few hours later. "It is not how I thought it was going to be." She is tired and looking forward to going home.

A further 50,000 Christmas presents which the Icelanders brought into Sarajevo in a Boeing 737 — 10,000 of them collected in Britain — have been distributed more discreetly and successfully to hospitals, orphanages and schools.

The time of gifts for Muslim Sarajevans is on New Year's Eve, but no one complains too much about Santa's antics.

With the peace deal reached in Dayton, Ohio, now signed and the Nato Implementation Force taking up position, reconstruction will soon start in earnest. Countries, institutes and organisations are jostling to publicise their benevolence.

Bosnians — most of whom believe that, with a little courage and leadership, the international community could have brought peace to their country three years earlier — will have to rehearse the role of grateful recipient.

But the best gifts are often hidden. Away from the glare of television lights, a shy, bearded man limps from Santa's 737.

Zlatan Mravinac's left leg was blown off by a mortar in November 1992. A year later he was evacuated to Iceland, where he has put on weight, studied computing and learnt to walk again.

Peace has allowed Zlatan and other Bosnian invalids and refugees around the world to come home — at least for now. He and his wife, Nasiha, hitched a ride on Santa's 737 for the sake of three intense, tearful hours with their family.

The bus from the airport took them past the front line

Continued on page 5, col 1

Photograph, page 3

Fury as Welsh opera plan killed

Maev Kennedy
Heritage Correspondent

THE Millennium Commission threw out proposals yesterday for the £88 million Cardiff Bay Opera House as "too risky", provoking furious accusations of metropolitan snobbery and anti-Welsh bias.

Lord Crickhowell, chairman of the opera house trust and a former Welsh secretary, said he was flabbergasted and admitted the project was probably dead. Opponents of the scheme had seen his immaculate political connections as giving the project an unfair advantage. Welsh MPs including Alex Carlile, leader of the Welsh Liberal Democrats, attacked the commission for snubbing Wales and Welsh culture.

"It's a bummer," was the reaction of the architect, the London-based Iraqi Zaha Hadid. "Do they want nothing but mediocrity?" Ms Hadid has won and lost the competition twice. She beat 270 others, including Sir Norman Foster, in the original international competition, but was then forced to submit a revised entry. Her plans for an uncompromisingly modern building have design has variously been described as a string of jewels and a deconstructed pigsty.

The opera house was to have been the centrepiece of the £2.75 billion regeneration project in the Cardiff Docklands, providing 1,600 building jobs and the new home for the Welsh National Opera.

The trust applied for a £2.75 million lottery grant for a feasibility study, leading to a £50 million full grant. The entire application has been rejected.

The local Labour MP Alun Michael, deputy chairman of the trust, said in Cardiff that the decision was incomprehensible. "After the enthusiasm of all the commissioners, and the positive response of special assessors, we must conclude that the dead hand of bureaucracy is at work," he said.

The decision is seen as greatly increasing the chances of the Welsh Rugby Union getting its £50 million grant in February for a new super-stadium to replace Cardiff Arms Park.

Lord Crickhowell gate-crashed the awards announcement in London yesterday — only winners were invited — to denounce the decision that the scheme was technically flawed and commercially risky.

His voice shaking with fury, he told his former Cabinet colleague, the Heritage Secretary Virginia Bottomley: "If it had been in England — certainly in London — I have no doubt that it would have gone ahead, with Arts Council support."

Mrs Bottomley said the commissioners were very disappointed to reject a proposal which they would have liked to support. But privately, the

Turn to page 5, column 7

St David's Hall, Cardiff
Nutcracker, Tchaikovsky, Dec 22

Top price	£19.50
Bottom price	£9.50
Capacity	1,964

Royal Opera House, Covent Garden
Aida, Verdi, Dec 22

Top price	£140
Bottom price	£29
Capacity	2,000

Cardiff Arms Park
Wales v Italy, Jan 16

Top price	£15
Bottom price	£6
Capacity	55,000

Context, Outlook, page 19

Singing nuns and lederhosen return to haunt faithful projectionist

Martin Wainwright

A FILM which caused unimaginable tedium, nervous breakdowns and the premature retirement of cinema staff has returned to haunt the man obliged to see it more often than anyone else.

Like a nightmare at Christmas, the simple joys of the Sound of Music have been chosen as a New Year treat by the National Museum of Film, Photography and Television in Bradford, whose head projectionist, Tony Cutts, screened the joyful epic in its original, record-breaking run in Leeds.

Originally booked in 1967 for a month at the old Majestic cinema, which drew audiences from Manchester and the Midlands, the Alpine saga stayed put for three years.

Seasoned staff, accustomed to a different film every fortnight, left in despair.

"After a year, colleagues were going left, right and centre," said Mr Cutts.

Now 54, he is actually looking forward to encountering Julie Andrews and the Von Trapp family once again.

Although Mr Cutts suffered a minor nervous breakdown as the nuns and lederhosen unreeled nightly, 28 years of Sound-free projecting have left him eager for a reunion.

"On the last day [of 1,663 screenings at the Majestic], I was almost in tears as I put each reel in the box," he said.

The museum admitted yesterday that it was not really geared for a repeat of the Leeds phenomenon, when a "risk" booking for a film panned by critics turned into a world record.

A museum spokeswoman said: "I'm not sure what happens if people want more than the New Year week we've arranged. Tony Cutts is probably the best person to advise."

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Squatters evicted

Bob Drogin in Moffat Park

ON A grassy hill overlooking Johannesburg, the new South Africa began to look distressingly like the old this week.

Using horses and armoured vehicles, nearly 300 police and soldiers fired tear gas, rubber bullets and stun grenades to evict an estimated 2,000 impoverished blacks who had built an illegal shanty town beside a white suburb.

Police Captain Stefan Wynbenga said his men had used force after people threw stones and wood. One man was injured and three arrested, he said.

Scores of forlorn squatters wandered amid the devastation as mechanical diggers razed their shacks and lorries hauled away twisted tin roofing and rubble.

Women nursed infants under tattered umbrellas, or sat on soggy mattresses beside their pots and pans. Miriam Budas, aged 37, washed her clothes and hung them to dry between two charred poles, all that remained of her hut.

"We will stay here in the field," she insisted. "I have no work and nowhere else to go."

The scene was an unsettling reminder of the forced removals of the apartheid era, when the white minority government uprooted an estimated 3.5 million blacks and dumped them on barren land in remote reservations known as homelands.

But the latest expulsion came after months of legal battles and a court order backed by a democratically-elected city council supported by President Nelson Mandela's black-led government. The squatters have been offered temporary shelter in nearby townships and eventual resettlement in government housing projects.

"This land belongs to the Johannesburg city council," said Charl van der Merwe, a deputy sheriff, who is supervising the eviction. "These people were squatting here illegally. I have a court order to dismantle and remove all the structures that were erected here."

Legal or not, the forcible eviction highlighted an increasingly painful problem for Mr Mandela's government. The abolition of apartheid-era laws banning blacks from living in white areas has led to an explosion of squatter camps in and around the big cities, exacerbating crime, illegal drug use and other social ills.

Cyril Ramaphosa, secretary-general of the African National Congress, blamed conservative white farmers for the land occupations, saying they had evicted tenant farm workers out of fear that they would claim the farms under government land-restitution schemes. Farmers' groups denied the charge.

The housing crisis is not new. The government estimated last year that up to 10 million people — nearly a quarter of the population — lived in substandard dwellings.

The first squatters arrived in Moffat Park in March. By last week about 500 cardboard shacks, tin shanties and plastic lean-tos covered the lush hills and gullies of this suburban park just south of Johannesburg.

Nearby homeowners complained of being terrorised. Philip Botha, aged 55, a retired banker, said the squatters had stolen pet ducks, rabbits and playground equipment from a school, broken into homes and cars and cut telephone and electricity cables.

" — Los Angeles Times.

Military reveals dirty deeds

Larry Rohter in Tegucigalpa

DURING its 10 years of "dirty war" against suspected guerrilla sympathisers, the Honduran military kidnapped, tortured and killed dozens of people, confident that their enduring grip on power meant they would never be held responsible.

Now, for the first time, a civilian court has charged 10 officers with those and other human rights violations in the 1980s. But with the backing of the commander of the armed forces, some of the indicted officers have gone into hiding. The commander is openly defying the elected civilian president.

Until December 1993 the human rights abuses of the 1980s and the military's role in them were virtually a taboo subject here. But that changed when the government's commissioner for human rights, Leo Valladares Lanza, published The Facts Speak for Themselves, a study documenting the forced disappearance and presumed death of 184 people.

Mr Valladares said in the report that at least 26 clandestine cemeteries were scattered around the country and that 100 or more current or former Honduran military officers might have been involved in the kidnappings.

He singled out the elite Battalion 3-16, set up and trained with the help of the United States and Argentina, as involved in the worst abuses.

Since then the government's special prosecutor for human rights violations, Sonia Dubón de Flores, and Judge Roy Medina have been trying to bring those responsible to justice.

In July, to the shock of civilians and soldiers alike, the 10 officers were charged with kidnapping and torturing six leftwing students in 1982. Unlike most of those who disappeared, the students survived.

"This is the first time in Honduras that a civilian court has carried out a trial of senior army officers," Mr Medina proudly noted at the time.

The CIA is also slowly and belatedly confronting the consequences of fighting the cold war in Central America. Throughout the 1980s its links with the Honduran military were very close.

Senior Honduran military officials, including some who oversaw Battalion 3-16, went on the CIA's payroll, according to US officials.

The CIA's role in the creation of Battalion 3-16 was substantial, former US and Honduran military and intelligence officials have said. General Luis Alonso Discua Elvir, commander in chief of the Honduran military for the last five years, received US training.

US officials say the agency instructed the battalion in purely non-violent interrogation and how to spy on suspected subversives. But an internal review at the agency may unearth harsher facts.

The head of the CIA, John Deutch, who ordered the inquiry, has called its work in Honduras an example of "how not to do things".
— New York Times.

Hands on . . . Gen Discua, once head of the suspect Battalion 3-16 and now Honduras's military chief, says there were no human rights violations

The weather in Europe

Forecast for the cities

Today

	max	min	weather
Algiers	18	11	Sh
Amsterdam	9	5	R
Athens	15	7	F
Berlin	9	4	R
Bonn	10	5	R
Brussels	11	3	R
Copenhagen	3	-2	R
Crete	13	8	F
Geneva	9	4	C
Larnaca	18	11	F
London	8	2	C
Madrid	12	6	Sh
Milan	11	7	R
Nice	18	8	Sh
Oslo	-8	-15	S
Paris	11	5	R
Rome	15	7	F
Stockholm	-4	-8	Sn
Tunis	18	10	F
Vienna	8	5	C

Tomorrow

	max	min	weather
Algiers	19	8	F
Amsterdam	5	1	R
Athens	12	7	F
Berlin	7	3	R
Bonn	7	3	C
Brussels	8	3	C
Copenhagen	0	-6	Sn
Crete	11	8	F
Geneva	6	3	F
Larnaca	15	9	F
London	5	-1	F
Madrid	14	8	F
Milan	11	7	F
Nice	13	6	F
Oslo	-8	-11	F
Paris	9	3	R
Rome	13	8	F
Stockholm	-4	-8	Sn
Tunis	17	8	F
Vienna	8	3	F

Monday

	max	min	weather
Algiers	20	9	S
Amsterdam	1	-4	Sn
Athens	13	8	F
Berlin	1	-4	F
Bonn	2	-5	F
Brussels	2	-1	Sl
Copenhagen	0	-5	Sn
Crete	13	9	F
Geneva	6	2	R
Larnaca	15	9	F
London	2	-2	S
Madrid	15	9	R
Milan	8	3	R
Nice	9	5	R
Oslo	-10	-13	F
Paris	8	2	R
Rome	12	6	C
Stockholm	-9	-13	Sn
Tunis	19	11	S
Vienna	3	0	R

Tuesday

	max	min	weather
Algiers	19	9	S
Amsterdam	1	-4	S
Athens	13	8	F
Berlin	0	-4	S
Bonn	2	-5	F
Brussels	2	-1	F
Copenhagen	-2	-7	S
Crete	13	9	F
Geneva	6	2	R
Larnaca	16	9	F
London	1	-3	S
Madrid	15	9	F
Milan	6	3	R
Nice	11	5	R
Oslo	-6	-17	F
Paris	4	2	Sl
Rome	12	6	C
Stockholm	-5	-10	F
Tunis	18	9	Sh
Vienna	4	2	R

C, cloudy; Cl, clear; Dr, drizzle; F, fair; Fg, fog; H, hail; Hz, haze; R, rain; Sh, showers; Sl, sleet; Sn, snow; S, sunny; Th, thunder. * (previous day's readings)

Around the world

Lunchtime yesterday (previous day in Americas)

		C	F			C	F
Ajaccio	C	15	59	Luxembourg	R	7	45
Algiers	S	21	70	Madrid	R	13	55
Amsterdam	R	9	48	Majorca	C	17	63
Athens	F	15	59	Malaga	C	17	63
Atlanta	S	3	37	Malta	F	18	64
B Aires	C	29	84	Mecca	C	21	70
Barbados	F	29	84	Melbourne	F	16	61
Barcelona	C	14	57	Mexico City	F	19	66
Belgrade	C	5	41	Miami	S	17	63
Berlin	R	-1	30	Milan	Dr	7	45
Bermuda	C	16	61	Mombasa	F	27	81
Biarritz	C	18	64	Montreal	C	-10	14
Bordeaux	F	14	57	Moscow	S	-10	14
Boston	Sn	-2	28	Munich	S	7	45
Brussels	R	11	52	Nairobi	F	25	77
Budapest	C	-3	27	Naples	F	17	63
Cairo	F	19	66	Nassau	C	21	70
Cape Town	S	28	82	New Delhi	S	19	66
Casablanca	F	22	72	New Orleans	C	6	43
Chicago	F	-1	30	New York	F	0	32
Copenhagen	C	-2	28	Nice	R	10	50
Corfu	S	14	57	Oporto	C	16	61
Dakar	F	25	77	Oslo	Fg	-17	1
Dallas	S	3	37	Paris	C	11	52
Dublin	Fg	9	48	Perth	F	27	81
Faro	R	18	64	Port Stanley	S	9	48
Florence	C	11	52	Prague	M	-2	28
Frankfurt	R	5	41	Reykjavik	S	-10	14
Funchal	S	21	70	Rhodes	S	16	61
Geneva	C	11	52	Rio de Jan.	F	31	88
Gibraltar	F	19	66	Riyadh	M	13	55
Hamburg	R	-2	28	Rome	C	15	59
Harare	F	24	75	Singapore	Sh	26	79
Innsbruck	C	4	39	Stockholm	S	-6	21
Islamabad	S	16	61	Strasbourg	C	8	46
Istanbul	F	6	43	Sydney	C	17	63
Jersey	C	12	54	Tel Aviv	F	19	66
Jerusalem	F	14	57	Tenerife	S	23	73
Jo'burg	F	25	77	Tokyo	S	11	52
K. Lumpur	Th	27	81	Toronto	F	-5	23
Karachi	S	25	77	Tunis	S	19	66
Katmandu	M	5	41	Valencia	S	18	64
Kiev	F	-5	23	Vancouver	F	8	46
Kingston	C	28	82	Venice	C	7	45
Larnaca	S	18	64	Vienna	M	-2	28
Lima	F	25	77	Warsaw	S	-5	23
Lisbon	C	17	63	Washington	F	2	36
London	C	13	55	Wellington	S	25	77
Los Angeles	S	15	59	Zurich	C	6	43

European weather outlook

Scandinavia:

Denmark will have a very unsettled day with outbreaks of heavy rain and snow. The snow will become confined to the far north and the hills for a while, but rain will turn to snow even at lower levels later. Southern parts of Sweden will also catch some snow today, but the rest of Scandinavia will be mainly dry and frosty. Temperatures will be a little above freezing for a time in southern Denmark, but elsewhere staying subzero.

Low Countries, Germany, Austria, Switzerland:

Very unsettled in the Low Countries, Germany, Austria and Switzerland with heavy rain at times, but mild with Alpine snow at levels above 7000 feet. Max temp 7-11C.

France:

Mild Atlantic air covers the whole country which means that it will be unsettled with bands of rain sweeping eastwards and followed in turn by blustery showers along western coasts. Max temp 9-13C.

Spain and Portugal:

Eastern Spain should escape with a dry day but fronts will bring rain in from the west to other areas, and some of the rain could be heavy in the north-west. Max temp 11-15C.

Italy:

A cold front will push a band of heavy rain south-eastwards across the country, but the extreme south should stay dry till after dark. Max temp 11-16C

Greece:

Some rain may arrive in north-west Greece late in the day but for most regions it will be dry and bright with some sunshine, and on the mild side for late December. Max temp 12-17C.

Television and radio — Saturday

BBC 1

8.25am News; Weather. 8.30 The Dwarf Tree. 8.40 Nick And Noel. 9.05 Eek The Cat. 9.30 The New Adventures Of Superman. 10.15 Live And Kicking. 1.30 News; Weather. 1.35 Joy To The World. 2.35 FILM: Problem Child 2. 4.05 FILM: Santa Claus - The Movie. 5.50 Final Score.

Meridian. 11.00 Newsdesk. 11.30 Play of the Week. The Snow Queen. 12.30 Jazz Now and Then. 12.45 Seven Days. 1.00 Newsdesk. 1.30 The Learning World. 1.45 Britain Today. 2.00 World News. 2.10 Press Review. 2.15 Early Visions. 2.30 From Our Own Correspondent. 2.50 Write On. 3.00 Newsday. 3.30 The Ed Stewart Show. 4.00 World News. 4.15 Sports

Television and radio — Sunday

BBC 1

8.30am FILM: The Pink Panther. 10.25 News; Weather. 10.30 Promise of His Glory. 11.15 FILM: Oliver! 1.25 A Flintstone Family Christmas. 2.00 News; Weather. 2.15 Noel's Christmas Past. 3.15 EastEnders. 4.40 FILM: E T the Extra-Terrestrial. 6.30 Antiques Roadshow - The Next Generation.

Anything Goes. 2.00 Newshour. 3.00 News Summary. 3.01 A Jolly Good Show. 3.45 Letter from America. 4.00 News Summary. 4.02 Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols. 5.30 News in German. 6.00 Choirs of Angels. 6.30 Early Versions. 6.45 Sports Roundup. 7.00 Newsdesk. 7.30 Play Of The Week: The Snow Queen. 8.00 Newshour. 10.00 World News. 10.05 World Business Brief. 10.15

هكذا من الاصل

World news in brief

French unions plan new wave of unrest

TRADE unions in France are planning a new-year period of industrial unrest after expressing disappointment at the outcome of the "social summit" with the prime minister, Alain Juppé, and employers.

More than 10 hours of discussions ended early yesterday with the communist-led CGT warning that public reaction would be "very severe". The secretary-general of the Force Ouvrière union, Marc Blondel, said there had been marked reluctance by the government to tackle any of the problems which led to widespread public sector strikes and mass protest marches.

The Socialist Party first secretary, Lionel Jospin, said nothing in Mr Juppé's offers was likely to reinvigorate the economy or create an impact on public opinion. "This was no way to end a powerful social protest or to create a new dynamic," he said.

Even Mr Juppé's best potential ally, the CNPF employers' council, dismissed the offers made by the Gaullist-led administration as "a poor man's Christmas".

But the prime minister's refusal to backtrack on welfare cuts boosted international investment, and the franc rose against the mark.

Mr Juppé, whose political future is in the balance, had promised important changes to boost employment and reinvigorate growth. In an attempt to boost consumer spending, he offered income tax concessions on investments cashed in to buy household goods such as refrigerators and furniture. Special interest-free loans for low-income house buyers will continue until the end of next year. But no extra funds were allotted for a programme to accelerate industrial agreements to help young people find jobs, despite Mr Juppé's appeal to unions and employers to commit themselves to placing 250,000 unskilled workers by 1997. — *Paul Webster, Paris.*

Action on Okinawa leases

THE Japanese government began formal legal proceedings yesterday to force protesting landowners on the island of Okinawa to renew leases of their land to the United States military for bases.

"The supply of bases is our duty; we must carry out that duty," said the prime minister, Tomiichi Murayama, explaining why the government had taken the action in the face of concerted Okinawan opposition.

Without the renewed leases, some key US bases would be illegal. Almost 75 per cent of the US bases and 46,000 troops in Japan are on Okinawa, which occupies only 0.6 per cent of Japan's land. Local opposition soared in September after the alleged rape by three US servicemen of a girl aged 12. — *Kevin Rafferty, Tokyo.*

PRI suspends Raúl Salinas

RAUL SALINAS, the brother of Mexico's former president, Carlos Salinas, has had his membership of the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) suspended and will probably be expelled from its ranks early next year.

The PRI ethics commission recommended the expulsion of Raúl Salinas — currently being held in Mexico's maximum-security Almoloya jail — because of evidence linking him to last year's murder of the party's secretary-general, José Francisco Ruiz Massieu, and more recent charges of embezzling state funds.

The PRI commission decided not to make a similar recommendation against the former president himself, despite a petition by 81 congressional deputies demanding his expulsion.

Although Carlos Salinas is widely suspected of involvement in last year's assassination of the PRI's presidential candidate, Luis Donaldo Colosio, he has not been charged with any crime.

However, the PRI commission said it would "continue to analyse documentary evidence" relating to the former president's actions. — *Phil Gunson, Mexico City*

Peres hints at N-disarmament

ISRAEL'S prime minister, Shimon Peres, has said his country is willing to "give up the atom" once states in the region have achieved full peace.

"Give me peace and we'll give up the atom," Mr Peres told Israeli journalists, after outlining his vision of the Middle East in the future. "If there's regional peace, I think we can rid the Middle East of the nuclear threat."

Officials neither confirm nor deny reports that the Jewish state has nuclear weapons, but foreign reports have claimed Israel has about 200 warheads.

When asked to be more specific, Mr Peres refused and said his comments did not confirm an Israeli nuclear-weapon capability.

But he added: "As long as the suspicion [that Israel has nuclear weapons] in itself can act as a deterrent, let them suspect. I don't see any reason to allay their suspicions."

Egypt has pressed Israel to sign the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, but it has long refused. — *Reuter, Tel Aviv*

'No evidence' against Banda

A MALAWIAN high court judge said yesterday there was no evidence that former president Kamuzu Banda ordered the killing of four politicians in 1983.

"Although Banda had unlimited authority and power, there is no evidence adduced in court to suggest that he ordered the killing," Judge Mackson Mkandawire told the court during his summing-up.

Dr Banda, his companion Cecilia Kadzamira, his associate John Tembo and three police officers were charged with the murders after a commission of inquiry found that the police killed the three cabinet ministers and an MP on government orders, contradicting reports that they died in a road accident.

Dr Banda, who is in his mid-90s, is not appearing in court in person because of frail health. He ruled Malawi for 30 years until being ousted in the country's first multi-party elections last year.

The state prosecutor, Kamudoni Nyasulu, said the judge's summary showed that the verdict would be "not guilty". He expressed annoyance that the judge was "obviously siding with the defence" and said he would appeal to the supreme court. The jury is expected to announce its verdict this afternoon. — *Reuter, Blantyre.*

Star taken to hospital

THE actor James Stewart (right) was taken to hospital yesterday after being injured in a fall at his Beverly Hills home.

The condition of the actor, aged 84, star of It's a Wonderful Life, Mr Smith Goes to Washington and Anatomy of a Murder, was not known, but carol singers outside his home said he was taken out on a stretcher with his head bandaged.

Stewart has starred in a wide range of films, including thrillers such as Rear Window and Vertigo, comedies, and even musicals. — *Reuter, Los Angeles.*

Haider offends president

THE Austrian president, Thomas Klestil, urged the far-right leader Jörg Haider yesterday to "clarify" his speech praising former members of Hitler's Waffen SS.

The president said Austria bore some responsibility for what happened during the Nazi regime. His office added: "The president has called on Dr Jörg Haider to react quickly to the understandable criticism of his latest comments on the role of the Waffen SS in the Nazi regime and in a manner befitting the sensitive nature of the subject."

Protests followed the broadcast by Austrian television on Tuesday of an amateur video showing Mr Haider praising a gathering in September that included former Waffen SS officers for "sticking to their convictions despite the greatest opposition".

After the screening, Mr Haider made things worse when he defended himself by saying: "The Waffen SS was a part of the Wehrmacht and hence it deserves all the honour and respect of the army in public life." — *Reuter, Vienna.*

PM's refusal to name an heir sparks bedside outbursts by his wife, writes **Helena Smith** in Athens

Papandreou clings to life and power

HOPE was fading fast for the Greek prime minister, Andreas Papandreou, last night as the veteran socialist leader fought for his life in hospital and the frontrunners in the race to succeed him bowed to the inevitable by meeting together.

Mr Papandreou, aged 76, ended his 33rd day in intensive care battling his fifth secondary infection since being admitted to the Onassis Heart Clinic.

Doctors said his weakened immunity system was such that they had "almost lost him" several times in the last few days.

"His body has reached exhaustion point after a month of life support systems for his lungs and kidneys," one hospital source said.

"It is the secondary infections that we are afraid of most. There will come a time when one will prove fatal."

A medical bulletin said that the latest virus was being treated with "broad spectrum" antibiotics. It had thwarted attempts to move him to a sterilised suite.

Although Mr Papandreou is not believed to be in a coma, it is clear that only a miracle can save him. Already, hospital sources have described his staying power as a medical phenomenon.

"His desire to live is incredible," said one source. "He has the most amazing reservoir of resources."

Dozens of international specialists, including the Egyptian-born British heart surgeon Sir Magdi Yacoub, have been called in to attend the prime minister in the past month.

A range of experimental wonder-drugs have been administered in an effort to build up his strength.

Mr Papandreou's determination to hold on to life has matched his refusal to give up power. It has also sparked an unseemly round of furious bedside rows with his young wife, Dimitra Liani.

A stupified Greek public have read of scenes and tantrums at the hospital between Ms Liani, who is her husband's chief-of-staff, and government officials and doctors.

> 'He is her lifeline and she realises that without him she will have no control or power in a post-Papandreou Greece'

Western diplomats said the politically ambitious former stewardess had become "ever more hysterical" as her husband's health worsened. "He is her lifeline and she realises that without him she will have no control or power in a post-Papandreou Greece," an EU observer said.

The ruling Panhellenic Socialist Movement (Pasok) is trying to distance itself from her.

It has been particularly piqued by Ms Liani's declaration that she will support "any decision the prime minister may make".

Dimitris Beis, who heads Pasok's 170-strong parliamentary group, said: "This last action is a clear intervention [in political affairs]. It is the party which will define future developments."

Despite being in frail health since open heart surgery in 1988, Mr Papandreou stubbornly refused to draw up a political will or step down. But many, not least in his inner circle, hoped he would name a successor from his sickbed.

Since Mr Papandreou entered hospital, Greece has been hamstrung by its constitution, which fails to provide for an incapacitated leader.

A prime minister has to be "eclipsed", an indirect reference to his death or formal resignation, to be replaced.

Mr Papandreou's prolonged absence from the political scene has been generated fears of a power vacuum. Although Mr Papandreou has been replaced by his loyal lieutenant Akis Tsochadzopoulos, officials admit that the acting prime minister lacks the power to take crucial decisions.

The struggle to succeed him has rapidly highlighted Pasok's faultlines. Since founding the party after the collapse of the Colonels' regime in 1974, Mr Papandreou has managed to unite its diverse factions through autocratic leadership and sheer unpredictability.

The Socialists, with two years left in office, have tried hard to assume a "united front" but a split is on the cards.

The heated exchange this week between the defence minister, Gerasimos Arsenis, and Professor Costas Simitis, the frontrunners in the race for power, has underlined growing fears for Pasok's future in a post-Papandreou Greece.

Open road . . . A woman in Grbavica, a Serb suburb of Sarajevo due to come under Bosnian government control, walks through an anti-sniper curtain PHOTOGRAPH: ROGER HUTCHINGS

Walesa leaves Poles in turmoil

Ian Traynor in Bonn

POLAND'S military prosecutors demanded more evidence yesterday of allegations that the prime minister, Jozef Oleksy, worked for years as a Kremlin spy, and delayed deciding whether to launch a formal investigation.

The statement came as Lech Walesa bowed out of the presidency. Mr Walesa left Belweder Palace, Warsaw, after effectively accusing Mr Oleksy, a former communist official, of spying for the Soviet Union and post-Soviet Russia.

The allegations, which Mr Oleksy denies, have overshadowed the inauguration today of another former communist and Oleksy ally, Aleksandr Kwasniewski, as president, who narrowly beat Mr Walesa in the presidential poll last month.

Since then Poland's political leaders have been involved in a succession of scandals, climaxing on Thursday when the outgoing interior minister Andrzej Milczanowski told parliament of Mr Olesky's purported service to Russia.

Mr Milczanowski, an ally of Mr Walesa, said the security services had known for years that there was a mole at the heart of the political establishment. But only since February, when Mr Oleksy became prime minister, had it become clear who the spy was.

Mr Milczanowski alleged that Mr Oleksy was a registered agent with cover and a code name and had passed classified information and documents to an unnamed foreign country — clearly Russia was meant.

But the chief military prosecutor, Ryszard Michalowski, said that the material supplied by the interior ministry was not enough for a formal investigation that could lead to treason charges.

The opposition is demanding Mr Oleksy's resignation, at least until the case has been clarified. Mr Oleksy has refused.

Even the Peasants' Party, which forms the government coalition with the reformed communist Democratic Left Alliance, is toying with supporting the opposition's demands, a move that could bring down the government and force early elections.

Mr Oleksy has offered to waive his parliamentary immunity if it would help an inquiry. Russian intelligence officials yesterday reiterated that Mr Oleksy had never worked for the Kremlin and described the allegations as a political provocation.

The turbulence is unlikely to settle quickly and Mr Walesa looks certain to stir more trouble out of office than in it.

As a result of Mr Kwasniewski's victory, Poland's government, parliament, and presidency are now controlled by the former communists who ruled unchallenged until 1989.

With the backing of the Roman Catholic Church, Mr Walesa is now seeking to forge a new rightwing alliance out of the fragmented opposition to rejoin battle with Poland's new rulers.

Since last month's election, Mr Kwasniewski has been investigated for lying about his educational qualifications during the campaign. He was found to have lied. Mr Walesa, meanwhile, is being investigated by the tax authorities in Gdansk for evading tax on a $1million payment from Warner Bros five years ago.

The events have been highly political. The justice minister, an Oleksy ally, sacked the prosecutor investigating the Kwasniewski case, sparking outrage in legal circles and the judiciary, while the finance minister, also an Oleksy ally, is believed to have had a hand in the inquiry into Mr Walesa's finances.

Yeltsin's ally patches together a presidential election vehicle

David Hearst and James Meek in Moscow

THE movement to re-elect Boris Yeltsin got under way in earnest yesterday as the scale of the pro-presidential party Our Home is Russia's defeat in Sunday's general election began to force a rethink in tactics.

While the Kremlin continues to claim that Yeltsin is not for turning, it is now clear that he has to seek wider support, primarily from the regions, if he is to stand a chance of being re-elected president in June.

One important sign of a rethink was the appearance of a key back-room tactician, General Georgi Rogozin, at the launch of a new presidential movement created by a close Yeltsin acolyte, Vladimir Shumeiko, leader of the Council of the Federation, the upper house of parliament.

Gen Rogozin heads the top secret think-tank controversially set up in the presidential security service, which is run by Mr Yeltsin's inseparable aide and companion, General Alexander Korzhakov.

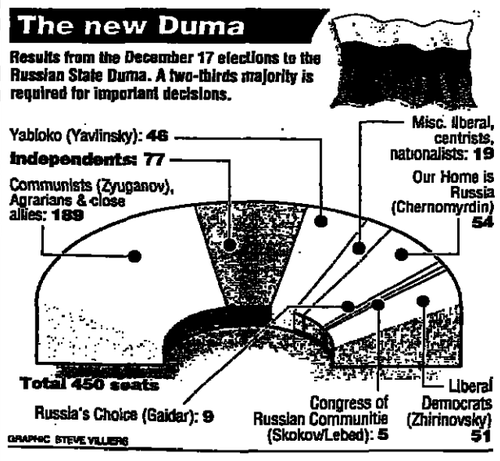
The new movement, called Reforms — The New Deal, borrows heavily from Communists and nationalists. Under the slogan Democracy, Patriotism, Statehood, it says the reforms cannot go on as they are. It says the role of the state in the economy and social protection "must be rebuilt", and calls for a remodelling of the tax system, which it says is currently a system of confiscation.

Before the election Mr Yeltsin dismissed the movement Mr Shumeiko was proposing. Now he has sent his chief of staff, Sergei Filatov, with a "warm message" to the founding congress.

Mr Shumeiko went out of his way to say that the idea had the president's backing. "It would be enough for the president to nod his head, and nobody would turn up here."

The new Duma

Results from the December 17 elections to the Russian State Duma. A two-thirds majority is required for important decisions.



GRAPHIC STEVE VILLIERS

More revealing still is the list of parties Mr Shumeiko said the movement would invite to join. There are obvious candidates, like the failed Our Home, led by the prime minister, Viktor Chernomyrdin, and the liberal reformers of Grigory Yavlinsky's party Yabloko and Yegor Gaidar's Democratic Russia's Choice.

But the invitations also include Gennady Zyuganov's Communists. The breadth of the list is more a sign of presidential desperation than of an established alliance: Mr Chernomyrdin and Mr Gaidar might sign up, but the Communists and Yabloko are very unlikely to.

The only three significant politicians not invited are the ultra-nationalist Vladimir Zhirinovsky, Alexander Rutskoi, leader of the failed parliamentary putsch in October 1993, and Viktor Anpilov, the Stalinist.

Though the last election results dribbling out yesterday confirmed the strength of the Communist revival, a more detailed analysis reveals a nation divided geographically and deeply inconsistent in its voting patterns.

In population terms, Russia is not like the vast landmass of geography. It is tadpole-shaped, with a densely populated European head and a long, thin tail stretching eastwards along the Trans-Siberian railway to the Far East.

The most densely populated urban areas of European Russia, Moscow and St Petersburg, produced results startlingly different from other areas of the country.

In Moscow, the "party of power", Our Home Is Russia, came top and the Communists third, and in St Petersburg the liberal Yabloko movement pushed the Communists into second place.

The densely-populated autonomous republic of Tatarstan, just west of the Urals, also bucked the national trend by giving Our Home the highest vote, thanks to the support of its president, Mintimer Shaimiyev.

Yet in nearby Bashkortostan — another autonomous republic, mainly Muslim but with many Russians — the Communists and the Agrarians between them got 50 per cent of the vote.

East of the Urals, where people are resentful of Muscovites siphoning off their natural wealth, and of the huge increase in the cost of travel, the Communists and Mr Zhirinovsky's oddly named Liberal Democrats scored huge successes.

The Liberal Democrats chalked up victories over the Communists in the Pacific Maritime region and in Magadan, while in the Siberian coal region of Kemerovo, formerly a bastion of support for Mr Yeltsin, the Communists got more than 53 per cent.

One of the most striking features of the elections was the apparently absurd inconsistency between the electorate's vote for local governors and local deputies and their general party preferences.

In Nizhny Novgorod, voters gave the young reformist governor, Boris Nemtsov, thundering support, but ignored his recommendation to vote for the liberal Yabloko party, putting it fourth.

Similarly, notorious liberals and Yeltsinites like Andrei Kozyrev and Gennady Burbulis won comfortably in constituencies which backed the Communists and nationalists in the national vote.

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IGC WHITE, DIRECTOR

Ahead of tomorrow's parliamentary elections, Jonathan Rugman in Istanbul looks at the rise of the Islamic Welfare Party and assesses how it will affect the precarious balance — inherited from the founder of the modern state of Turkey — between the country's Middle Eastern roots and its European aspirations

Below he profiles the embattled prime minister, Tansu Ciller, the collapse of whose rightwing coalition forced the vote

Deep, crisp, even . . . Two local polling officials carry a ballot box through deep snow towards the Anatolian village of Erzurum in preparation for tomorrow's general election

Islam advances in land of Ataturk

A CLICHE which has reverberated down the ages is that Turkey, a Muslim country bridging Europe and the Middle East, stands at a crossroads between the Islamic east and the secular-Christian west.

The general elections tomorrow, caused by the collapse of Tansu Ciller's coalition government, are likely to reveal the difficulty Turks still face in deciding which path to take. So fragmented is the vote between fractious secular parties and the radical Islamic Welfare Party or "Refah", that the first six Turks interviewed in a straw poll in Istanbul yesterday named six different parties they would support.

Those who backed Leftwing parties included intellectuals and students, concerned about civil liberties and workers' rights. Supporters of the right — Ms Ciller's True Path Party and the Motherland Party of Mesut Yilmaz — spoke of the free market and Turkey's privatisation programme. All of them backed closer ties with Europe.

It didn't immediately occur to many of those interviewed that the 83 per cent inflation rate was the main election issue. Their choices seemed to be based as much on the leaders' nationalistic personalities as on their policies, many of which defy the labels of left and right and offer similarly vague panaceas for improving living standards and defeating Kurdish terrorism in the south-east.

All disagreed as to the extent of the threat posed by the Islamic revivalist Refah, which most opinion polls rank as Turkey's first or second party. "Turkey is on firm ground," said a 30-year-old English-speaking engineer. "We've seen Refah govern municipalities, and they are nothing to be afraid of."

"It will be a catastrophe if the Islamists come to power," said a retired teacher, but his only evidence was that Refah's town council in Istanbul had renamed streets after Arab sheikhs and painted bus stops an Islamic green.

One headscarved housewife, having asked her husband for permission to speak, said she would vote for Refah because it had cleaned up Istanbul's polluted environment, put more buses on the streets, speeded the building of a metro and given more help to the handicapped.

And a poor Turkish bagel seller, working outside a five-star hotel, seemed to speak with more conviction than anyone else when he said he would vote for the Islamic revivalist party. "We tried the other parties and they failed, but Refah is honest," he said. "We ask God for rain. When it comes to politics, we shouldn't close the doors on Him there, either."

A story which speaks volumes for modern Turkey's predicament concerns Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, the soldier-statesman who founded the republic in 1923. One day Ataturk summoned two orchestras — one Turkish, one European — to play for him at an Istanbul hotel overlooking the Bosphorus Straits.

After the Turkish orchestra had played for a short while, Ataturk would order it to stop and then ask the Europeans to play a little. And so the concert veered from one musical style to the other, until Ataturk — the worse for drink — lost patience with the Turco-European cacophony he had created and walked out.

That story came to mind last week, when the European Parliament overcame its misgivings about human rights to ratify a customs accord between Turkey and the European Union. In gratitude, a senior Turkish diplomat gave the MEPs compact discs of Turkish orchestras performing European classical tunes. Ataturk's dilemma of musical tastes appeared to have been resolved: "For the first time, Turkey is definitely anchored within Europe," the diplomat concluded.

It was Ataturk ("Father of the Turks") who set Turkey on a Western trajectory, abolishing the Islamic caliphate banning religious schools, scrapping the Arabic script and introducing a Western dress code which removed the veil, chador and fez.

But although last week's customs union vote was a victory for Ataturk's heirs, it doesn't alter the fact that the European straitjacket into which Ataturk forced his country still doesn't quite fit. Turkish voters remain divided over which tune they should be playing.

"The state ideology is afraid of the people's religion, but now the real face of Turkey is appearing," said Abdullah Gul, Refah's deputy leader.

Mr Gul resents the severity of Ataturk's reforms, which deprived his father of the freedom to learn the Koran in Arabic. He speaks of the millions of poor Turks living in shacks and governed by corrupt, secular politicians. And he says the customs union with Europe was a sellout to a continent which has failed to defend Muslim rights.

Under the chairmanship of a polemical former university academic, 69-year-old Necmettin Erbakan, Refah's uncompromising message and slick organisation — probably funded by Saudi Arabia and Iran — have taken it from strength to strength.

Refah polled 8.5 per cent of the vote in 1987, then 16.4 per cent in 1991 (during an alliance with the ultra-right), and then 19 per cent on its own in local elections last year, when it frightened the secular establishment by winning the mayorships of Ankara and Istanbul.

Refah is expected to garner between 20 per cent and 25 per cent this time. Far from a national majority, but possibly enough to oust the Yale-educated prime minister, Tansu Ciller, and earn the right to form the next coalition government.

The rise of Refah stems in part from the cultural schizophrenia which has plagued Turkey since Ataturk's day. The average urbanised Turk is rarely more than a generation away from his family's puritan Muslim village roots. For him or her Islam provides a moral refuge and sense of continuity during a traumatic time of technological advance and social change.

Islam also helps solve the dilemma that many once great empires face: how to justify its position on the world stage?

A few years ago the Turks were trumpeting their newfound influence in the former Soviet republics of the Caucasus and Central Asia. More recently they have had to face up to the fact that Russia is still the dominant regional power. And the fallout from Turkey's assistance to a Western air coalition protecting Kurds in northern Iraq has included an exacerbation of Turkey's own Kurdish conflict, and the loss of trade with Iraq, Turkey's biggest trade partner in the region.

By contrast the Refah Party recalls the golden memory of the Ottoman-Islamic past, the capture of Constantinople by Suleyman the Conqueror in 1453 and the creation of an empire stretching from Poland to Egypt.

"Imitators like the Emperor Constantine of Byzantium will cry to the West for help every day," Mr Erbakan told a rally recently in anticipation of a Refah victory.

Mr Gul — tipped as Refah's foreign minister — dismisses such rhetoric as "just politics", but his party's manifesto is certainly radical. Refah wants to create interest-free banking (with banks supervised by "moral bureaux"), to end Turkey's dependence on International Monetary Fund loans, start an Islamic common market and renegotiate the customs agreement with Europe — dubbed by Mr Erbakan "the poison of Frankenstein".

Mr Erbakan blames the CIA, the Freemasons and Zionism for many of Turkey's social ills; all ammunition for Ms Ciller, who has that Turkey will be plunged into the "dark ages" if it votes for Refah tomorrow.

But beyond Mr Erbakan's talk, his party is a broad church which includes technocrats like Erol Yarar, the head of a pro-Islamic business association representing 6,000 Turkish companies. "When theory comes to application, many things have to change," Mr Yarar admitted. "Structural change can be evolutionary rather than revolutionary."

Many analysts believe it will be impossible and undesirable for the party to imperil Turkey's orientation towards the West, where the country's most powerful trade, investment and defence partners lie.

What is perhaps most worrying about these elections is not Refah's threats, but the absence of a leader of the calibre of Turkey's late president, Turgut Ozal, to forge a consensus in parliament.

The primary danger posed by tomorrow's result may emerge if no workable coalition is found. It is a scenario few dare contemplate, but one that Turkey has seen before; no political consensus, governments coming and going as the economy spins out of control, political violence on the streets and — the ultimate disaster — a military coup.

Even if a secular party wins the chance to form the next coalition, it will be Refah which will bask in a new high of support. Turkey clearly needs leaders capable of binding all the country's fragmented constituencies together: musicians who can play both Ataturk's secular and Islamic tunes.

Turkey profile

Population: 61 million

Capital: Ankara (population: 4 million)

Biggest city: Istanbul (9 million)

Religion: 98 per cent Muslim, mainly Sunnis

Annual per capita income: $2,210

Annual inflation rate: 83.8 per cent

Unemployment: 7.9 per cent (1994)

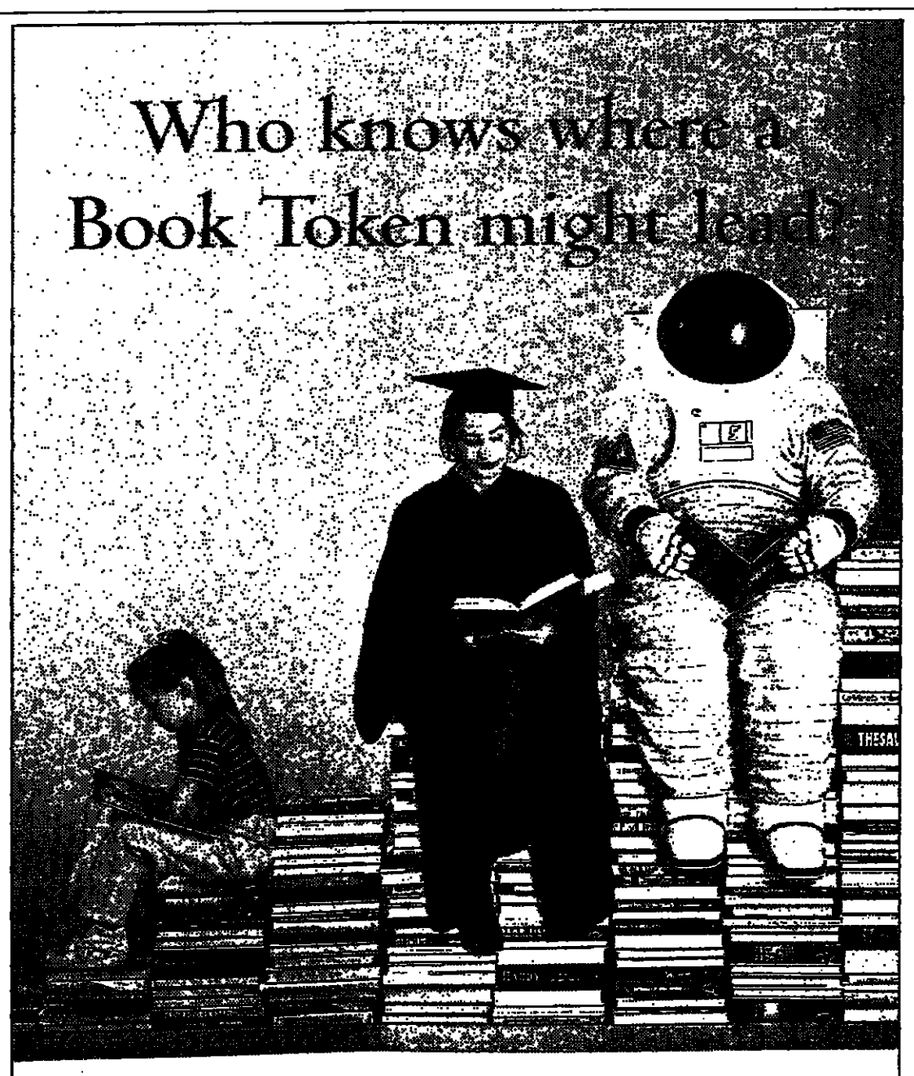
Predicted economic growth: 6.8 per cent this year

Tourism: earned more than $4 billion for Turkey in 1995.

Trade: biggest export is clothing.

Defence: World's biggest arms importer in 1994. Its army stands at 590 000 men. Some 20,000 people have died in the 11-year war with Kurdish PKK rebels.

(Sources: Turkish government, EIU, OECD, Human Rights Watch)



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Lady with the Iron Smile grins and bears it through war and austerity

IF TURKEY'S prime minister, Tansu Ciller, holds on to power tomorrow and is asked to form a new coalition, it would be a remarkable victory for a woman who has maintained the bloody stalemate in Turkey's war with Kurdish PKK rebels and presided over an inflation rate which reached 150 per cent at last year's peak.

But in a country as nationalistic as this, Ms Ciller's ability to grin and bear calamity is perhaps her greatest asset, earning the 49-year-old economics professor the nickname "Lady of the Iron Smile" when she took over the conservative True Path Party from Suleyman Demirel, who became president in 1993.

"We will come to power on our own," Ms Ciller said recently, ruling out a partnership with the pro-Islamic Welfare Party. "It's me versus them. I am for Westernisation, secular government, the link with Europe. The people are fed up with coalitions and want stability."

Having battled with a 10-party parliament which has often seemed to rank Ms Ciller's downfall as a higher priority than passing laws, the prime minister's political successes have been limited.

Earlier this year she pushed through a privatisation package which yielded just one fifth of its projected income for 1995. Ms Ciller's attempts to reduce Turkey's budget deficit of at least $4 billion through austerity measures and an IMF loan programme have been hindered by her failure to introduce a proper tax system, and by pay rises she was forced to give striking public sector workers.

Under pressure from the European Parliament, Ms Ciller has steered through modest changes to a law prohibiting freedom of expression. She has also introduced measures aimed at decentralising government, and her reforms to the military era constitution included lowering the voting age to 18.

Tansu Ciller: glamorous, tenacious, shameless

But perhaps her most notable achievements lie overseas, where Ms Ciller's personal charm has enabled her to get round critics of Turkey's human rights record, presenting herself as the only alternative to Islamic fundamentalism. As a result, MEPs approved a historic customs agreement with Turkey last week.

A Western diplomat who knows her well commented: "if you were to wake Ciller up in the middle of the night and ask her if she really believed in democracy and human rights, I guess she would say yes" — but her choice of parliamentary candidates includes the hardline former armed forces chief, police chief and governor of Kurdish provinces, all of whom will appeal to nationalist voters and none of whom advocate ethnic rights for the Kurdish minority of 10-15 million.

Whatever Ms Ciller says abroad, Kurdish village burnings, disappearances in police custody and prison sentences for political dissidents, including Kurdish MPs, have marked the prime minister's messy period in power.

"We have progressed from a situation when there were daily headlines about bloodbaths," Ms Ciller said in her defence, "to a period in which the attitude prevails towards unity and togetherness".

But although rebels of the Marxist-Leninist PKK have been weakened by a big military offensive, many ethnic Kurds demanding cultural and political freedoms will show their opposition to Ms Ciller by voting tomorrow for the pro-Kurdish Hadep party or the Islamic Refah.

The prime minister has recently been stung by accusations that she abandoned the cause of Turkish-occupied northern Cyprus in exchange for Europe's backing for the customs union, and the opposition frequently accuses her of having irregularly amassed a personal fortune worth $50 million, including property in the United States.

But for her critics, perhaps Ms Ciller's most annoying trait is her shamelessness. The Turkish press recently accused her of engineering a photo opportunity by arguing her way into a seat behind President Clinton at Yitzhak Rabin's funeral; and after the European Parliament's customs union vote, Ms Ciller had the nerve to take a call of congratulations from President Jacques Chirac on her mobile telephone, while on stage during an election rally.

This week the glamorous prime minister appeared in her favourite designer outfit to witness the sacrificial slaughter of three sheep in the western town of Manisa. On occasions such as this Ms Ciller looks decidely ill at ease with traditional Muslim culture.

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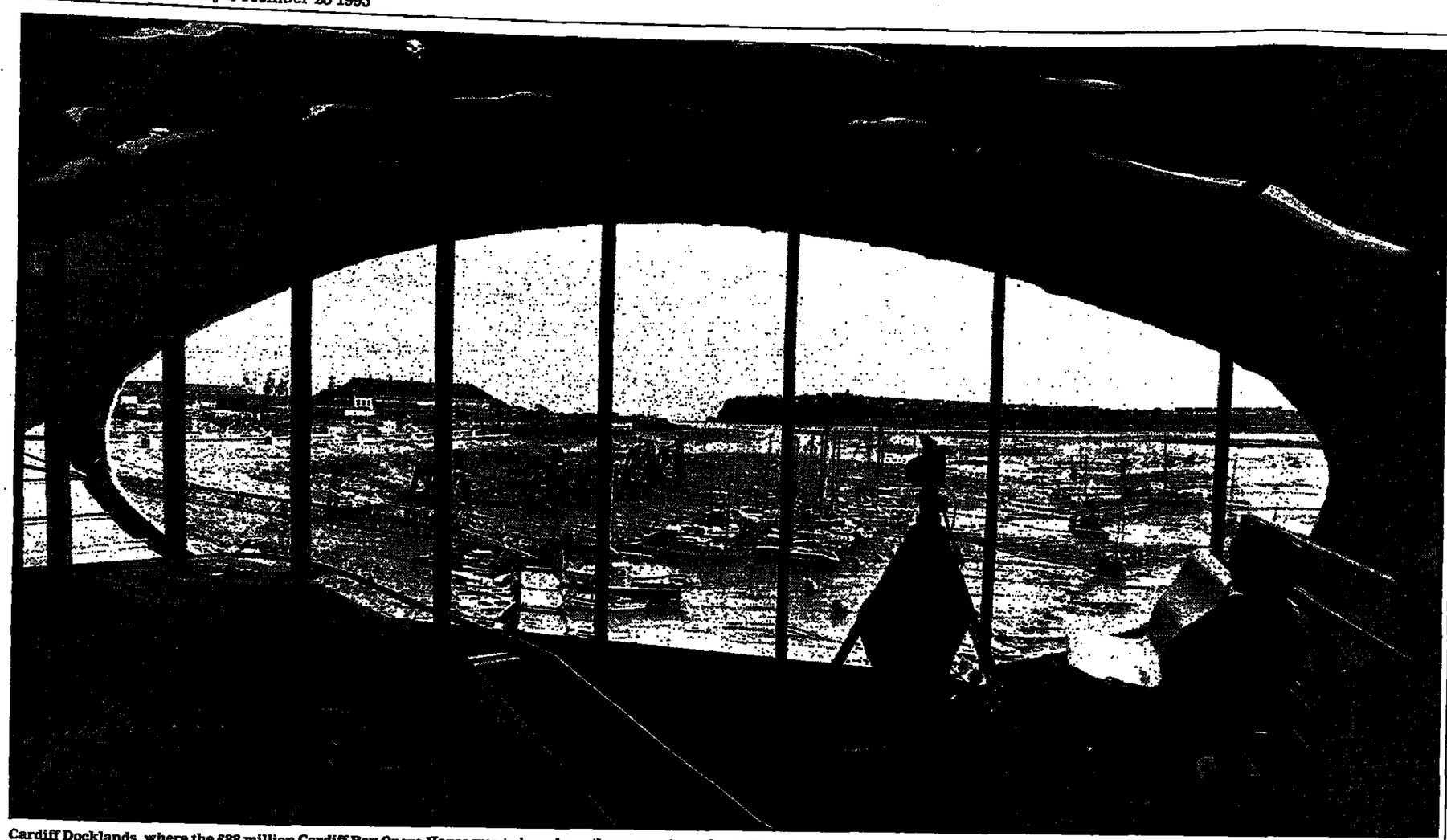


Cardiff Docklands, where the £88 million Cardiff Bay Opera House was to have been the centrepiece of a £2.75 billion regeneration project, and the Welsh National Opera's new home PHOTOGRAPH: FRANK HERRMAN

The awards

■ The main recipient is the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew, for the Millennium Seed Bank, which gained £21.5 million. The underground bank will be built at Wakehurst Place, West Sussex, where it will house 25,000 species of plants and seeds.

■ Llanelli borough council was awarded £14.5 million to create a coastal park.

■ England's only stretch of magnesium limestone cliffs is to be restored and conserved with the help of £4.5 million of Millennium money. Durham county council is carrying out £9.9 million of work.

■ A 60ft observation tower will be the centrepiece of the redevelopment of the WildFowl and Wetlands Trust headquarters at Slimbridge, Gloucestershire. The Commission awarded the trust £2.8 million towards the £5.6 million project.

■ A £3.3 million National Wildflower Centre is to be set up in Merseyside with the help of £1.6 million from the Commission.

■ Residents of the Berkshire village of Wargrave will have access to the River Thames for the first time with the help of £240,000 from the Commission. And the villagers will have a new bridge to link up with Shiplake.

■ Four parishes have been given grants for new community and village halls: £713,000 to Pensilva in Cornwall; £150,000 to Ingleton in Co Durham; £146,500 to Sully in Glamorgan and £126,000 to Moulsoe in Buckinghamshire.

Land of song forced to pin hopes on rugby stadium

James Meikle and **Maev Kennedy** report on Cardiff's competing projects

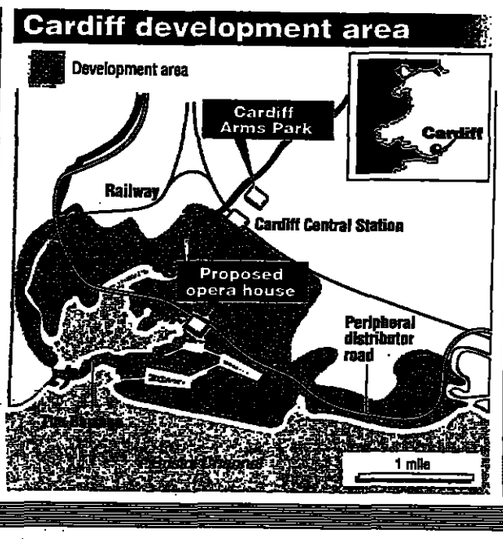
THE Millennium Commission is determined to leave the country permanently marked by the year 2,000, in the form of 12 projects, each attracting up to £50 million in grants. Beyond that simple ambition there is a political and geographical minefield. It was always unlikely that Cardiff would get two of the projects.

In crude terms the battle was seen as a fight between "real Welsh" supporting the super-stadium, and toffs and incomers baying for a new opera house.

The opera house scheme attracted superlatives. It was to be a new Sydney Opera House at the end of a new road linking the revitalised docklands to the city centre, a boulevard to rival the Champs-Elysées. The city would become a European centre of arts, culture and the media.

The Welsh Rugby Union was preparing to cry political foul. Its plans were also rejected, but it was invited to submit a reworked version, which the commissioners will consider in February.

The Cardiff Bay Development Corporation promptly hitched its wagon to the new star. Its chairman, Sir Geoffrey Inkin, yesterday described the decision as: "A major hiccup, but not a killer blow. The corporation looks forward to an early and positive decision by the commission on the Welsh Rugby Union proposals."



Stars express bitter disappointment at lost opportunity but pledge to fight on

THE chairman of the Welsh National Opera, Lord Davies, and two of the shining stars of Welsh opera expressed their shock yesterday at the Millennium Commission's rejection of the Cardiff Bay Opera House.

Lord Davies said they were bitterly disappointed and that it was a lost opportunity for the people of Cardiff and Wales. Welsh National Opera would have made it its permanent home and opened all productions there.

Dame Gwyneth Jones and Denis O'Neill expressed the common view that London already had an unfair slice of the arts cake. Dame Gwyneth said: "There have been so many arts projects in London which have got funding ... but our fight must go on."

Mr O'Neill said he was disappointed at the slap in the face for Wales and Welsh culture. "The commission has been extremely short-sighted."

While the two big London companies, Covent Garden and the English National Opera at the Coliseum, plan redevelopments which could cost three times as much as the Cardiff Bay proposal, the regional opera companies have no permanent base large enough to allow commercial success.

Covent Garden has already won a £78 million grant to rebuild the opera house and build a temporary theatre on the Thames.

Fury as Millennium Commission rejects proposals for opera house as 'too risky'

continued from page 1

executives and commissioners were unequivocal. "We don't want to be trapped into building a British Library in Wales," one said.

The deputy chief executive, Heather Wilkinson, said: "Quite frankly there were still bits of the design where we didn't know if they were going to have a car park or a hotel."

The commission is determined to give a landmark grant to south Wales, but came under intense lobbying from both the rugby and opera camps. One commissioner, the millionaire industrialist Sir John Hall, is believed to have changed his mind against the opera house at the last minute.

The chief executive of the commission, Jennie Page, said that they were very concerned about the longterm viability of the project, when the commission would no longer be in existence. "The truth is the project doesn't work, and it wouldn't have worked in England either," she said.

The uproar completely overshadowed the grants announced by Mrs Bottomley. The promised landmark grant, of £21.5 million, went to Kew Gardens, London, for a £67 million project to collect 25,000 species of seeds and freeze them for conservation. The seed bank would be housed in a spectacular new building.

Princess resists pressure on divorce

Sally Weale

THE royal family was attempting to put the difficulties of the last week behind them as they gathered at Sandringham last night for their traditional Christmas celebrations, with the exception of the Princess of Wales who was continuing to hold out against pressure to agree to a speedy divorce.

The princess's office said yesterday she was still considering letters from both the Queen and the Prince of Wales urging her to consent to a quick settlement, but as the festive season got under way negotiations appeared to have been put on hold.

It is likely to be a brief respite, however, with discussions bound to resurface promptly after Christmas, particularly focusing on the princess's hopes of playing an ambassadorial role for Britain. The Foreign Office is said to be unenthusiastic about her proposal. The princess, however, is already planning a trip to Chicago in June among other visits next year.

Despite the extraordinary intervention of the Queen who issued her ultimatum on Monday, the princess is said to be determined not to be hurried into a divorce for the convenience of her husband's family until she is confident of her future status.

The Christmas period provides an ideal breathing space for the princess, whose lawyer, Lord Mishcon, is on holiday until January 8. She is expected to fly to Vail, Colorado, for a skiing trip after deciding against joining the royal family at Sandringham, the Queen's Norfolk estate.

Members of her circle have indicated that although she was angry that private correspondence had been leaked, she felt that the cards were firmly in her hand, since without her agreement the prince would face a two-year delay before a divorce.

One close friend of the princess was reported to have said: "She won't be pushed because she knows she can't be. She is very calm and says there is a long list of things to go through before they reach the point at which divorce need be announced."

Another absentee at Sandringham will be the Prince of Wales's friend, Camilla Parker Bowles.

Yesterday both the prince and princess, who have completed their official engagements for the year, were keeping out of the public eye in an attempt to subdue media interest.

After a year of virtually non-stop publicity including two intimate television documentaries, the Queen is said to want to limit media coverage of the royal family's private affairs, starting with the Christmas morning service at Sandringham Church where the number of photographers and journalists allowed to cover the occasion has been halved from 40. The prince will join the family accompanied by Prince William and Prince Harry.

The Sun, which broke the story on Wednesday that the Queen had demanded that the Prince and Princess of Wales should divorce quickly, claimed yesterday that the prince had a recent meeting with Mrs Parker Bowles during which she told him she was content to live in his shadow so that he could accede to the throne.

The newspaper said Mrs Parker Bowles had told friends: "I will always be there for the Prince of Wales although I will never be his wife. I want nothing more than to see him on the throne. It is his destiny. It is what he deserves. There is a conflict between the individual and the institution and in this case the institution must win."

Two women, one throne, Outlook, page 14

War-weary Bosnians rehearse role of grateful recipient

continued from page 1

where Zlatan lost his leg, and along Sarajevo's wrecked boulevards. They looked out at the ruins, both hiding tears.

"It is a shock, to see what Sarajevo has become," Zlatan says. He sits with his father and his wife's family in their small flat a hundred yards from where Santa was besieged. Relatives come and go, and he questions them about the war, the litany of the dead and the survivors.

The Mravinacs have brought woollen Icelandic sweaters for the family, who look a little lost in them. Alongside those who return, those who remained are shrunken and grey.

Nasiha's brother, Nijaz Babic, is given a bulky blue box. Inside is a new, plastic foot and a silicon knee-joint. Nijaz lost his leg a few months before his brother-in-law, struggling ever since with a locally-made prosthesis which chafes against his stump.

The Mravinacs sit discussing the technicalities of living with one leg — and Nijaz agrees to have it fitted on Christmas Day.

It is suddenly time to leave. Zlatan and Nasiha offer no promises about their next visit and admit, under pressure, that they have no immediate plans to return permanently.

"It is too soon," says Zlatan. "No one knows what will be. Everyone here is talking about re-arming and hitting the Chetniks [Serb nationalists] if they make trouble. We'll see."

There is a problem about returning to Iceland. The insurance company will not let the plane wait for Santa and Zlatan in Sarajevo airport, so it has gone to Split. To land in Sarajevo again to collect them would cost an additional £8,000.

Travelling to Split by road is also fraught with problems. In the past two days, Nato has dismantled the Serb checkpoints around Sarajevo and declared the roads open.

The logic is that, if the roads are open, convoys out of Sarajevo have no more need of military escorts. It is a logic few Sarajevans are willing to test. Bus companies are certainly not going to take the risk.

In the end, the dilemma is resolved when the Icelandic peace institute pays the insurance money.

Zlatan and Nasiha embrace Nijaz and the rest of the family and board the bus, which grinds through the ragged streets towards the airport. Christmas is over before it has begun.

The real failure of the years in the wilderness — for which *mea* amongst others *culpa* — was Labour's inability to understand that it needed an ethical framework on which to hang its programme. We clutched policies out of the air as if they were doves caught by a conjuror.

Roy Hattersley

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Heseltine 'needlessly added' to metric woe

Michael White
Political Editor

MICHAEL Heseltine pushed ahead with the final metrication of imperial weights and measures against the advice of his then-consumer affairs minister that no such change was required under European law.

Not only did Whitehall implement a costly and unnecessary order which "rang the death knell over virtually all the imperial measures used since time immemorial", it actually imposed more onerous burdens on businesses — including fines of up to £5,000 — than those imposed under the EU's Unit of Measures directive, according to Neil Hamilton, minister under Mr Heseltine, now Deputy Prime Minister, when he was President of the Board of Trade.

"It was a great disappointment to me that the Government pressed ahead," Mr Hamilton says in an article for the European Journal. "I argued the case, but failed to convince Michael Heseltine to do more than delay the measure as long as possible."

He says he refused to introduce the measure to Parliament. It was introduced in the Lords last year and came into effect on October 1 this year.

Mr Hamilton, who resigned over the cash-for-questions row, was in charge of deregulation — Mr Heseltine's campaign against red tape. He accuses Whitehall of interpreting the Brussels directive in a way which added to "the peaked cap and clipboard brigade's power to harry our fellow-citizens." Instead of making metric all "authorised measures" — except special cases like pint measures of beer and milk — ministers could have let people choose.

Last night the Department of Trade and Industry stood by its insistence at the time that the move was the climax of a 30-year shift to the metric system, first mooted in 1871.

About 80 per cent of groceries have been sold in metric units for at least 10 years, officials said. A parallel system "would confuse consumers and impose costs on business."

The DTI said there had also been criminal sanctions to enforce "authorised units" of imperial measures, but the "DTI is not aware of any prosecutions for failing to use metric units in the 20 or so years in which they have been mandatory in some areas".

The metrication legislation "does not go further than the [EU] directive", it said.

Michael Heseltine . . . 'acted against minister's advice'

Neil Hamilton . . . 'change not required by EU law'

Chancellor Kenneth Clarke, a steam enthusiast, at the controls of the Duchess of Hamilton at a Christmas festival on the Great Central Railway, Leicestershire PHOTOGRAPH: GRAHAM TURNER

Supergun agent to spend Christmas in S Africa jail

David Beresford
in Johannesburg

A SOUTH African magistrate yesterday refused to grant bail to a former British spy, expressing concern that MI5 might help him flee a United States extradition warrant.

Paul Grecian, aged 40 — who exposed plans to supply Saddam Hussein with a "super gun" — was arrested at Johannesburg airport last week despite a personal assurance from Interpol that there was no warrant out for him.

He had travelled to South Africa for a holiday with his girlfriend, but was told by a magistrate yesterday that he would have to spend the festive season in jail pending a hearing on January 22.

Mr Grecian is wanted in the US to face charges of bank fraud, perjury and the illegal sale of American artillery fuse components to Iraq. He was cleared of similar charges last month by a British court which found he had been acting for MI6.

The magistrate, Dion Schnetler, said that Mr Grecian faced a possible 25-year sentence in the US and even if he surrendered his passport there was a likelihood he would skip bail.

"Unfortunately it is extremely easy to obtain another passport, especially in view of his connections with MI5," he said. "It is in the interests of justice to refuse bail."

The extradition warrant is likely to be contested by local lawyers raising, among other issues, that of double jeopardy. But the South African authorities are highly sensitive to US pressure where arms dealing is concerned thanks to a long-running row over an apartheid-era sanctions-busting case involving the local arms manufacturer, Armscor, and an American firm, the International Signal and Control Corporation.

The US Justice Department, refusing to concede the distinction between the "old" and "new" South Africas, has been attempting to levy multi-million dollar fines against Armscor for its part in the case and has tried to impose a "compliance programme" involving full disclosure of all arms sales and development projects here.

Mr Grecian told reporters that he was a pawn in a political game and he was happy to fight the US extradition bid in the courts.

Elizabeth Poulle, his fiancee, added: "Grecian has spent the last five years of his life trying to clear his name in the UK and when he arrives in South Africa he is arrested on what we consider trumped-up charges."

Minister accused of betraying fishing fleet

Stephen Bates in Brussels

FISHERMEN, opposition politicians and Tory Eurosceptics joined forces yesterday to attack the deal on next year's fishing quotas reached after all-night negotiations by European Union ministers.

Even as Tony Baldry, the Fisheries Minister, was proclaiming success in limiting cuts in quotas, he was accused of betraying the fishing industry.

Barry Deas, chief executive of the National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations, warned that some boats might act illegally and try to evade the new quotas. "These vessels are already operating on very tight quotas. Increasingly the option for some of these trawlermen is going to be to go bankrupt or start cheating on quotas," he said.

EU fisheries ministers have now agreed to cut fishing quotas for the seas off western Europe. But the cuts were smaller than those recommended by the European Commission, which had asked independent scientists to estimate the minimum cuts needed to preserve stocks.

Mr Baldry said he had secured quotas for British fishing fleets which were 10 per cent higher than the scientists had recommended — 50,000 tonnes more fish and a £30 million bonus to the beleaguered industry — though total catches will be down.

The minister said: "I have achieved my objective of securing the best possible deal for British fishermen consistent with the conservation of future stocks."

The quotas set maximums for the number of fish for each type to be caught, though the proportion allocated to each national fleet remains constant. Fleets can trade part of their quotas with other countries.

The agreement, supported by 14 of the 15 EU states with only Sweden objecting, will allow British boats to catch 12,700 tonnes more herring, 4,700 tonnes more whiting, 6,100 tonnes more plaice and 345 tonnes more sole, than the commission had wanted. All other fleets will be able to catch proportionately more fish than the commission had urged.

Overall however, the plaice catch will be down 38 per cent, mackerel down 33 per cent and herring down 15 per cent. Cod and saithe catches will rise 8 and 5 per cent, and haddock will not change.

Swallowing its disappointment over the halving of targets to conserve fish stocks, the commission maintained that it was satisfied that it was a step in the right direction.

Emma Bonino, the Italian fisheries commissioner, said: "I would have preferred more rigorous action to preserve fish stocks. I think it is needed . . . but it was a step in the right direction."

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Work stops as health and safety officers try to find out how a routine task on gas drilling rig went disastrously wrong

Amec's north Tyneside yard, scene of the gas explosion that killed three experienced pipefitters. The victims included Steve Welford, left, of Whitley Bay and Ian Hamilton of Hebburn MAIN PHOTOGRAPH: NEIL WASP

Freak blast kills three fitters at oil shipyard

Martin Wainwright

HEALTH and safety inspectors took over an offshore oil shipyard on the Tyne yesterday after a freak gas blast killed three pipefitters.

Work was halted until further notice at the Howdon yard of Amec engineering, where staff had just heard that they were virtually certain to take a share of a £2.5 billion Royal Navy contract for five new submarines.

Unions and management voiced horror at the tragedy.

Nitrogen gas under pressure to test a series of pipes on a gas drilling rig appears to have burst from the system, catching the three men with enormous force in a confined space. One died instantly and the other two in hospital. Four others were treated and released soon afterwards.

The Health and Safety Executive sent two inspectors to the yard immediately after the accident on Thursday night, with two more joining the inquiry yesterday. A spokesman said it was too early to speculate on the cause.

One of the slightly injured men said: "As far as I know they were taking a flange off when it happened. I was just assisting the riggers when it went up. The next thing I knew I was just wandering around."

The victims were named last night as Steve Welford, aged 38, of Whitley Bay on Tyneside, who died at the scene, and Sean McAlindon, 41, of Jarrow and Ian Hamilton, 32, of Hebburn, who died in hospital. The men with minor injuries came from Newcastle upon Tyne, Sunderland, Blyth and Aberdeen.

Station officer George Arnott of Northumberland fire service, which sent 40 men to the yard, said that the third deck of the rig, where the accident happened, was "a strange scene — nothing seemed out of place except there were three casualties lying there seriously injured. Once we started inspecting the site, however, we realised something quite severe had happened."

The blast was an escape of gas rather than an explosion, and there was no fire, he said.

Martin Gannon, North East regional officer for the General Municipal and Boilermakers Union, which represents most of the Amec workforce, said: "This is a notoriously dangerous industry, but we will be looking to make sure this sort of tragedy never occurs in the future."

Amec's director of operations, Dennis Scott, said: "We were in the process of doing some high pressure testing using nitrogen, which is a system we use normally.

"But obviously something did go wrong and there was a release of high pressure gas.

"Until we get the HSE reports I am afraid we cannot say too much more about the incident.

"Everyone is in deep shock and our deepest sympathies go out to the families and friends of the casualties. As a mark of respect, it has been decided to send everyone home until further notice."

Plum gift sent back

Paul Brown, Environment Correspondent

EIGHT of 47 homemade Christmas puddings sent to civil servants by a printing company with thanks for the year's business have been returned lest they be seen as bribes. The rest have apparently been eaten.

It was the Department of the Environment which, fearing a scandal, returned eight of its nine puddings. The ninth was consumed before the ruling was made. The Foreign Office and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Pollution accepted their puddings without question.

Andrew Fewster, owner of Pylon Design of Crystal Palace, south London, made the puddings with his wife, Philippa. He thought it all a "little sad" that the good cheer was returned. "We thought that since the gift was under £10 and homemade it would not be seen as a bribe.

"I do not want to get anyone at the Foreign Office into trouble, but they seemed to not have the same scruples."

The returned puddings will be distributed to elderly people.

The Department of the Environment said Pylon Design was an excellent company which won its contracts for work on public information leaflets by competitive tender.

The pudding eaten before the ruling was delicious, the spokesman said.

BBC1 losing viewers to cable and satellite

Andrew Culf
Media Correspondent

Source: Continental Research

VIEWING of cable and satellite channels has increased in the past year, mainly at the expense of BBC1, according to figures published today.

The channels increased their share of the audience in cable-subscribing homes from 34.9 to 39.6 per cent between October 1994 and 1995. BBC1's share in these homes fell from 24.3 to 21.2 per cent.

The figures, compiled by Continental Research for the Independent Television Commission, give the cable industry a boost after a disappointing showing in 1994. Industry observers had predicted much faster growth for the sector and have been surprised by its sluggish performance.

Sky One is the most popular channel, with a 4.8 per cent share of the audience, although this represents a drop from 6.6 per cent in 1993.

Children's stations like the Disney Channel, launched in Britain this year, and Turner's Cartoon Network, have helped to reverse the decline in cable viewing, with children becoming one of its fastest growing audiences.

Cable stations accounted for 54 per cent of total viewing by youngsters aged two to 15 in cable-connected homes, and nearly 64 per cent among those aged under nine. More than 30 per cent of the total time was spent watching the Cartoon Network.

More than a third of homes with cable or satellite have two or more decoders, enabling families to watch more than one subscription channel at a time.

While adult viewing in cable-owning homes has dropped by about 12 minutes a week to 25.13 hours, children's viewing has increased from 19.95 to 22.47 hours a week in one year.

Latest commission figures show 1.16 million households in Britain with cable TV.

- ITV, which has snatched the FA Cup Final and Formula One motor racing from the BBC in the past month, yesterday trumpeted a year of successful sports audience figures.

The network had seven of the top 10 sports programmes in 1995, with the largest audience of 13.1 million for the Benn-McClellan boxing bout in February. The Grand National was the BBC's biggest sports audience for the year at 11.9 million.

Diet aid plotter guilty

Marketing man in conspiracy with ex-Young Slimmer of Year

MARKETING consultant Peter Foster was yesterday found guilty of conspiring with a former Young Slimmer of the Year to sell a bogus diet product.

Foster, 33, the former boyfriend of topless model Samantha Fox, was remanded in custody at Liverpool crown court until January 11 for a pre-sentence report.

Foster, an Australian who lives in Hadley Wood, north London, had been charged with conspiring with Michele Deakin and others to supply slimming granules under the name Deakin Diet, contrary to trading standard rules.

Deakin, aged 27, now the mother of twin girls, pleaded guilty to the same charge at the same court in 1990, and was given a suspended prison sentence and fined £250.

The prosecution alleged that Foster contacted her when she was named Young Slimmer of 1988. He persuaded her to endorse his product — made from guar gum which induced a full-up feeling — although she had never used it. The court heard she had, in fact, reduced her weight from 22 stone to 10 stone by her own efforts.

After Foster was convicted, the court heard that last year he had been fined for a similar offence involving Bai Lin tea, claimed to be a slimming aid, and was also on bail for another alleged offence relating to a thigh reducing cream.

Deakin was only 19 and unemployed when she won the award from Slimming magazine. Foster sent a chauffeur driven limousine to her home at Huyton, Merseyside. Later a contract was drawn up in which she would be paid £1,000 a week for endorsing the Deakin Diet, also known as Michele's Miracle.

But trading standards officers received complaints. People who sent off £14.95 for two weeks' supply of the granules received nothing. And the court heard that Deakin only received £2,000 from Foster which also included her expenses.

Judge Hamilton told the jurors before discharging them after the verdict: "If you over-indulge during Christmas, I hope you will be better informed about slimming remedies."

You can easily spot elderly peers there; not by their grey heads, but by their gait. They either have sticks or else they shuffle along like the mildly demented. Not Michael Young.

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RACING: Runners and riders for the 10 Boxing Day programmes

Chris Hawkins takes a chance on the King George favourite despite adverse going forecasts

One Man to prove he's no stick-in-the-mud

Man at the gate . . . One Man takes his dawn exercise amid snow flurries at Gordon Richards's Cumbrian quarters PHOTOGRAPH: DON McPHEE

IN VIEW of a weather forecast which suggests there could be snow over Christmas, Gordon Richards has taken the precaution of declaring One Man at Wetherby on Boxing Day as well as for the King George VI Tripleprint Chase at Kempton.

Whether the snow materialises or not, the going at Kempton, after two inches of rain in the past five days, is already soft and could get worse — conditions definitely not ideal for One Man, who was withdrawn from the Hennessy at Newbury because of the heavy ground.

"If it became very heavy Gordon would have to think seriously about it," said Joan Richards, wife of the trainer, yesterday. "But the plan is to run at Kempton if at all possible. The ground drains well there and, hopefully, it *wouldn't get as bad as at* Newbury."

One Man has won on the soft and was taken out at Newbury in order that he did not have a hard race on the run-up to the King George, which has always been his big target, but spring-heeled jumpers such as he are normally disadvantaged by cloying ground.

It is a great shame the elements are threatening to intervene and spoil a race which could otherwise be a scintillating affair.

With Coulton, Dublin Flyer, Merry Gale and Barton Bank all liking to be at the head of affairs early on, it looks as if there will be plenty of pace in the race and it will be a tactical dilemma for Richard Dunwoody as to when he allows One Man, who normally races keenly, to become involved.

If One Man is feeling on top of the world and unworried by the ground he could make it very easy for Dunwoody.

At times he has looked the second Desert Orchid, not only in colour but in agility and ability, and it would be a great result for racing if he could skip round and win in the style of a true champion, but in the current circumstances this now seems unlikely.

Francois Doumen has a great record in the race, having won it four times, and saddles last year's victor Algan as well as Val d'Alene, winner of last season's Racing Post Chase here in heavy going, when One Man fell.

Val d'Alene is probably the better of the pair and ran encouragingly when third at Auteuil recently. He cannot have it too soft and must have a big chance.

Algan was a lucky winner of this last year when Barton Bank was clear only to unseat his rider at the final fence.

Barton Bank, who has a tendency to break blood vessels, failed to win in five outings last season, twice hitting the deck. But extensive schooling seemed to have improved his jumping when he reappeared to break the track record at Wetherby.

He is versatile and has won on heavy going, but if he were to win, David Nicholson could rightly claim to have achieved the training feat of the decade.

Monsieur Le Cure, second to Algan last year, has a grossly exaggerated knee action and loves the mud, but is slow. He is 4lb better off with One Man for an 11-lengths beating at Haydock and on the altered going has a squeak, but his jockey will probably finish the more tired.

Dublin Flyer, Coulton and Egypt Mill Prince are good handicappers stepping up in class as well as distance. Of the trio, Dublin Flyer, who jumps well and is extremely game, would seem to have the best prospects.

Merry Gale, the Irish challenger, is another not certain to get the trip, although he has won over three miles. Graham Bradley held him up when he won the Martell Cup at Aintree, but his normal style is to blaze away and Dunwoody let him do this when winning the Punchestown Chase over two and a half miles last time.

Kim Bailey is supposed to be so excited about Book of Music, a 20 lengths winner of *his only race last season, that* he cannot sleep at night, but it is only in dreams that such inexperienced horses win top races (Bailey's Alderbrook being an exception).

Brief Gale had a full novice season and, after winning at Kempton on the heavy, she took the Sun Alliance Chase at Cheltenham from Harcon and Banjo. With the ground in her favour she has an each-way chance.

Thus, having sifted the runners, I still believe One Man (2.20) has enough to recommend him. On good ground he would be a confident selection, but even in adverse conditions he may still have sufficient class to beat Val d'Alene and Brief Gale.

Earlier kick-off for 1996 Derby

NEXT year's Vodafone Epsom Derby, which clashes on Saturday, June 8, with England's opening game against Switzerland in the European soccer championships, will be the second race on the card, *starting at 2.25pm, writes Chris Hawkins.*

Edward Gillespie, managing director of United Racecourses, made the announcement yesterday, emphasising the need to maximise the television audience.

"The timing is critical," he said. "The build-up to the football on television goes quiet for half an hour after 2.15, when the teams warm up, and bringing the race forward by five minutes allows uninterrupted radio and television coverage, with replays and the presentation.

"The first race will be at 1.45 and that will give enough time to get ready *for the Derby. Vodafone are* happy and we hope everyone, after they've got over any shock they may feel, will work with us and not against us."

Gillespie was referring to the persistent criticism and undermining of the race which has been going on in the media recently.

"No long term decision about whether the race will revert to Wednesday will be made until after next *year's race," he added.* "It was always going to be a two-year experiment. Perhaps the best thing would be to have a public tossing of a coin, rather like Lord Bunbury and the Earl of Derby all those years ago."

The British Horseracing Board has cut the number of evening fixtures by 15 next season.

Many of the changes involve the transfer of fixtures to afternoons in the *early part of the evening* season, when doubtful weather and early start times limit attendances.

Off-course bookmakers have long complained about the poor turnover from evening meetings.

Kempton runners and riders with form guide

12.45 Shankar
1.15 Hill Of Tullow
1.45 Cheryl's Lad
2.20 One Man
2.50 Callisoe Bay
3.20 Sesame Seed (nb)

Going: Soft. ★ Denotes blinkers.
Figures in brackets after horse's name denote days since latest NH outing.

Channel 4

12.45 BONUSPOST NOVICE HURDLE 2m £7,003

101	F422-12	SHANKAR (18) (D) (BF) D Nicholson 4-11-10	A Maguire
102	40-	BRAZIL OR BUST (311) P Webber 4-11-5	R Powell
103		DESERT GREEN R Hannon 6-11-5	R Hughes
104	R-5P	DONTFORGET INSIGHT (21) C Brooks 4-11-5	G Bradley
105	00-1	IGGINS (21) (D) J Gifford 5-11-6	P Hide
106	3	INDEFENCE (17) Mrs J Pitman 4-11-5	W Marston
107	5/-112	MASTER BEVELED (17) (D) P Evans 5-11-5	J Osborne
108		RIVER NORTH Lady Herries 5-11-5	R Dunwoody

8 runners

TOP FORM TIPS: Master Beveled 8, Shankar 7, Iggins 6

1994: Who Is Equiname 4 11 0 M Fitzgerald 20-1 (N J Henderson) 11 ran

Betting: 2-1 River North, 11-4 Master Beveled, 4-1 Shankar, 5-1 Iggins, 10-1 Desert Green, 12-1 Indefence, 33-1 Dontforget Insight, Brazil or Bust

FORM GUIDE - SHANKAR: In touch until outpaced run-in, 2l 2nd to Zephyrus (Cheltenham 2m1f, Gd).
IGGINS: Held up, effort halfway, led last, bt Welsh Mill by 3l with DONTFORGET INSIGHT (levels) weakened soon after halfway, tailed off when pulled up 2 out (Huntingdon 2m½f, Gd-Sft).
INDEFENCE: In touch until one pace from last, 7l 3rd to Crown Equerry (Haydock 2m, Gd).
MASTER BEVELED: Headway 4 out, challenged from next until outpaced by winner run-in, 5l 2nd to Mack The Knife (rec 12lb) (Haydock 2m, Gd).

Channel 4

2.20 KING GEORGE VI TRIPLEPRINT CHASE (Grade 1) 3m £63,835

401	U6-P030	ALGAN (23) (CD) F Doumen 7-11-10	P Chevalier
402	PU3F6-1	BARTON BANK (58) (CD) D Nicholson 9-11-10	A Maguire
403	P2300/1-	BOOK OF MUSIC (374) K Bailey 7-11-10	M A Fitzgerald
404	111-10F	COULTON (35) O Sherwood 8-11-10	J Osborne
405	11U21-1	DUBLIN FLYER (45) (C) (D) T Forster 9-11-10	B Powell
406	00-3122	EGYPT MILL PRINCE (26) (BF) Mrs J Pitman 9-11-10	W Marston
407	1241-21	MERRY GALE (31) J Dreaper 7-11-10	G Bradley
408	4163-22	MONSIEUR LE CURE ● (17) (CD) J Edwards 9-11-10	J F Titley
409	11UF-11	ONE MAN ● (17) (D) G Richards 7-11-10	R Dunwoody
410	25-23F3	VAL D'ALENE (23) (CD) F Doumen 8-11-10	A Kondrat
411	5/23112-	BRIEF GALE (249) (C) J Gifford 8-11-5	P Hide

11 runners

TOP FORM TIPS: One Man 9, Barton Bank 8, Merry Gale 7

1994: Algan 6 11 10 P Chevalier 16-1 (F Doumen, France) 9 ran

Betting: 9-4 One Man, 3-1 Barton Bank, 7-2 Merry Gale, 8-1 Dublin Flyer, 14-1 Algan, Val d'Alene, 20-1 Book Of Music, Brief Gale, Coulton.

FORM GUIDE - BARTON BANK: Won this race in 1993 and clear when unseating rider at final fence last year, leaving ALGAN (lvl) to bt MONSIEUR LE CURE (lvl) 2½l (Sft). On reappearance Barton Bank led 3 out, clear last, bt Young Hustler 7l (Wetherby 3m½f, Gd-Fm)
BOOK OF MUSIC: Prominent in Gold Cup betting though unraced since came from behind to lead 2 out, scored by 20l from Martins Lamp on chasing debut last December (Ascot 2m3½f, Gd).
COULTON: Led, challenged and looked set to finish third, when fell last fence in Grade 2 event won by Travado (Huntingdon 2m4½f, Gd).
DUBLIN FLYER: Game winner of Mackeson Gold Cup, made most, headed last, rallied splendidly to regain advantage run-in, bt EGYPT MILL PRINCE (rec 13lb) led last until close home, by ½l, with COULTON (gv 6lb) headway from rear halfway, no extra after slight mistake 2 out, around 24l further away 7th (Cheltenham 2m4½f, Gd).
MERRY GALE: Made all, stayed on strongly, bt King Of The Gales by 10l (Punchestown 2m4f, Gd-Sft).
ONE MAN: Soon in touch, led before halfway, clear 2 out, eased flat, bt MONSIEUR LE CURE (gv 4lb) led to 7th, outpaced from 2 out, by very easy 11l (Haydock 3m, Gd).
VAL D'ALENE: Soon in touch, 7½l 3rd to As des Carres in £60,000 chase, with ALGAN (rec 12lb) around 30l further away 7th of 12 (Auteuil 2m6f, Sft)
BRIEF GALE: Unraced since last April when soon in touch, outpaced from 3 out, eased run-in, 11l 2nd to Unguided Missile (Ayr 3m1f, Gd). Had previously won Sun Alliance Chase, led app 2 out, ran on well to bt Harcon 9l (Cheltenham 3m1f, Sft).

Betting: 7-2 Cheryl's Lad, 4-1 Grooving, 7-1 Bookcase, 8-1 Keep Me In Mind, 10-1 Albemine, Dino Malta, 12-1 Kingsfold Pet, Sohrab, 14-1 Namaste, Acasecio

FORM GUIDE - CHERYL'S LAD: Headway 3 out, led app last, comfortably, bt Morstock by 6l with DINO MALTA (gv 1lb), stayed on app last, further 17l away 4th and FOURTH IN LINE (gv 5lb), led 4th until after 2 out, sprawled last and not recover, further 30l back in 8th (Cheltenham 2m1f, Gd).
SNOOFK: Ridden and held when fell 2 out in race won by Pridwell (Ascot 2m, Gd).
BOOKCASE: Stayed on under pressure to lead last strides, bt KEEP ME IN MIND (rec 7lb) by hd, with SECRETARY OF STATE (rec 21lb) well btn 7th (Exeter 2m2f, Gd). Previously BOOKCASE btn 3½l in 3rd to Chief's Song, with ALBEMINE (gv 1lb) another 12l back in 7th (Sandown 2m, Gd).
GROOVING: Easy winner last time, pushed clear from last, comfortably bt Pampillo by 8l with NAMASTE (gv 6lb), one pace when blundered at last, further 30l back in 3rd (Fontwell 2m2f, Sft).

● Trainers are permitted to doubly declare horses for Boxing Day. ● After horse's name denotes its first preference; ●● denotes second preference.

● Blinkered for the first time: HEREFORD: 1.35 Flying Imp; 3.05 Ballydougan. MARKET RASEN: 12.25 Salutation; 2.00 Hillwalk; 3.35 Scottish Wedding. SEDGEFIELD: 3.10 Fly To The End. NEWTON ABBOT: 12.50 Tragic Hero; 1.50 Damas; 2.30 Bramblehill Buck, Hillwalk. WINCANTON: 3.15 Carnival Kid. WETHERBY: 3.20 Valley Garden.

Ayr

12.25 Old Red
12.55 Cutthroat Kid
1.25 Lochnagrain
1.55 Marco Magnifico
2.25 Stormy Coral
2.55 Strong Mint

Going: Good to soft. ★ Denotes blinkers.

12.25 AULD LANG SYNE MAIDEN HURDLE 2m 4f £2,188

1	0	CELTIC GIANT (10) L Lungo 5-11-5 … R Hodge
2	38	DAWN ROCK (8) R McKellar 4-11-5 … D Parker (3) ★
3	33-6325	EXPLORE MONDIAL (34) T Dyer 4-11-5 … A Linton (7) ★

Wincanton

12.40 Silver Shred
1.10 Yorkshire Gale
1.40 Top Cees
2.10 Gales Cavalier
2.45 The Carrot Man
3.15 Campion Bologo

Going: Good to soft. ★ Denotes blinkers.

12.40 FATHER CHRISTMAS FILLIES' 'NH' NOVICE HURDLE

1	0	FRANK IRISH (18) G Thorner 10-12
2	0035	GAME DILEMMA (21) J Mellins 10-12
3		JOY FOR LIFE R Stronge 10-12

Newton Abbot

12.50 Faustino
1.20 Lemon's Mill
1.50 Damas
2.30 Silverino
3.05 Ramstar
3.35 Fox On The Run

Going: Heavy. ★ Denotes blinkers.

12.50 THURLESTONE HOTEL JUVENILE HURDLE 3YO 2m 1f £2,880

1 VOLUNTEER (38) R O'Sullivan 11-5 — Peter Hobbs
2 OUT RANKING (37) (D) M Pipe 11-0 — D Bridgwater
3 BALLESWHIDDEN (20) B Smart 10-12 — M Molloy (7)
4 CYRUS THE GREAT (19) (BF) K Bailey 10-12 — J Magee (3)
5 FAUSTINO (10) P Hobbs 10-12 — G McCourt
6 FEISTY BOSS (57) N Twiston-Davies 10-12 — T Jenks
7 GENUINE LEADER (10) P Murphy 10-12 — N Mann ★
8 GOLDEN POUND Gay Kelleway 10-12 — A P McCoy
9 JARVEY (66) P Eccles 10-12 — Murtagh Kelly (7)
10 SAILEP R Hodges 10-12

[illegible]

4 FOX ON THE RUN (32) Andrew Turnell 8-11-0 — A P McCoy ★
5 YOUNG TESS (56) N Babbage 5-10-12 — N Mann
6 MR PLAYFULL (13) R Frost 5-10-6 — J Frost
7 MEGAMUNCH ● (34) R Juckes 7-10-0 — D Salter (5)
8 HAILE DERRING (208) N Twiston-Davies 5-10-0 — T Jenks
9 CELTIC REG ● (11) Mrs H Parrott 5-10-0 — —
10 OLD DEER PARK (44) P Jones 8-10-0 — Mr M Burrows
11 WEXFORD MODEL (158) V Greenway 5-10-0 — M Griffiths (7)

11 runners

TOP FORM TIPS: Young Tess 8, Megamunch 7, Fox On The Run 6

1994: Pennymoor Prince 5 11 1 R Darke 4-1 (R G Frost) 9 ran

Betting: 5-2 Mellion Pride, 4-1 Fox On The Run, 5-1 Haile Derring, 6-1 Highest Rocca, 8-1 Young Tess, 10-1 Cavalero, Mr Playfull.

Sedgefield

12.40 South Westerly
1.10 Livio
1.40 Irish Gent
2.10 The Toaster
2.40 Greenfield Manor
3.10 Sharkashka

Going: Good (Good to firm in places). ★ Denotes blinkers.

12.40 JOHN WADE NOVICE HURDLE 3m 3f 110yds £2,262

1 471111 SOUTH WESTERLY (20) (CD) Mrs M Reveley 7-12-2 — G Cahill (7)
2 50-F12 RYE CROSSING ● (65) (C) M H Easterby 5-11-4 — F Perratt
3 030 AVOWHAT (6) J O'Neill 5-10-12 — R McGrath (7)
4 5P BARNSTORMER ● ● (45) E Elliott 9-10-12 — O Pears
5 P002-06 BUYERS DREAM (33) J Hellens 5-10-12 — S Taylor (7)
6 2 DAVID'S WAY (28) M Hammond 6-10-12 — R Burns (7)
7 00P/PP5- GAYTON RUN ● ● (222) S Campion 6-10-12 — P Midgley (3)
8 000-40 KINGS MINSTRAL (28) D Lamb 5-10-12 — A Manners (7)
9 0 MASKIN BROOK (20) W Barker 7-10-12 — G Harker

[illegible]

Market Rasen runners and riders

12.25 Dream Start
12.55 Ivy House
1.25 Kingdom Of Shades
2.00 High Padre
2.30 Native Field
3.05 Going Around
3.35 Dugort Strand

Going: Good to soft. Hurdles, Good (Good to soft in patches) ★ Denotes blinkers.

12.25 MISTLETOE SELLING HANDICAP HURDLE 2m 1f 110yds £1,786

[illegible]

13 00- GILDORANS LASS (274) J R Upson 4-11-0 — J Supple (3)
14 2-1 HENRIETTA HOWARD (36) Mrs D Haine 5-11-0 — G Hogan (3)
15 00-40 OLD BETSY (10) Mrs S Smith 5-11-0 — L McGrath (7)
16 U2- RUMI ● (291) C Egerton 4-11-0 — M Brennan

16 runners

TOP FORM TIPS: Kingdom Of Shades 8, Rumi 7, Honey Mount 6

No corresponding race

Betting: 5-4 Kingdom Of Shades, 6-1 Rumi, 7-1 Henrietta Howard, 8-1 Ah There You Are, 10-1 Alosan Blue, 12-1 Honey Mount.

2.00 LINCOLNSHIRE NATIONAL (HANDICAP CHASE) 4m 1f £10,601

1 PP4/-111 HIGH PADRE (10) (C) J FitzGerald 9-11-7 — F Leahy (3)
2 011-3UU DARK OAK (10) (C) J Curtis 9-11-2 — L O'Hare
3 55F0-44 DO BE BRIEF (12) Mrs J Pitman 10-11-1 — J Lawrence

4 299-PF1 MATT REID (10) (C) J Leigh 11-10-11 — Mr W Morgan
5 610-640 HILLWALK ● (12) R Curtis 9-10-10 — A Thornton ★
6 311101 IFFEEE ● (10) P Bowen 8-10-8 — R Guest
7 3324-0P NASTON WHIM ● ● (13) M H Easterby 9-10-4 — W McFarland
8 3322-P5 DIAMOND FORT (12) (CD) J McConnochie 10-10-4 — M Brennan
9 133-4 PINKIE PRIDE (13) M Hammond 8-10-0 — Mr C Bonner (3)
10 35421-5 SPROWSTON BOY ● (18) M Chapman 12-10-0 — W Worthington

10 runners

TOP FORM TIPS: High Padre 8, Diamond Fort 7, Matt Reid 6

1994: Fish Glo 7 9 13 D Bentley 5-1 (M D Hammond) 9 ran

Betting: 10-11 High Padre, 5-1 Matt Reid, 8-1 Iffeee, 10-1 Do Be Brief, Pinkie Pride, 12-1 Diamond Fort, Sprowston Boy.

2.30 ROSSLAND GROUP KILVINGTON HANDICAP HURDLE 2m 3f 110yds £4,913

[illegible]

7 55-5U DUGORT STRAND (30) O Brennan 4-11-0 — M Brennan
8 U-F015 LITTLE BLACKFOOT (20) (CD) (BF) J L Harris 7-10-10 — J Lawrence
9 RO- THE ADJUTANT (730) F Murphy 7-10-10 — M Foster
10 C CELTIC CEILIDH (20) Mrs M Reveley 4-10-9 — O Lee (5)
11 00- SCOTTISH WEDDING (390) W Clay 5-10-8 — Guy Lewis (5) ★
12 P HEALTHY RISK (17) T Kersey 4-10-8 — Susan Kersey
13 D TREE OF TIME (83) J Norton 4-10-6 — E Callaghan (5)
14 0P BUZZARDS HALL (10) M Chapman 5-10-5 — W Worthington
15 TAUFELIANE J L Harris 4-10-5 — G Hogan (3)

15 runners

TOP FORM TIPS: Stac-Pollaidh 8, Princess Maxine 7, Little Blackfoot 6

1994: Tulu 3 10 7 R Garritty 11-10 (Mrs J R Ramsden) 16 ran

Betting: 3-1 Stac-Pollaidh, 7-2 Princess Maxine, 6-1 Almamzar, 7-1 Dugort Strand, Lucy Tufty, 8-1 Just Flamenco, 10-1 Little Blackfoot, 14-1 The Adjutant.

Huntingdon

12.30 Hatcham Boy
1.00 Second Call
1.30 Eyre Point
2.00 Maneree
2.30 Ask Me Kindly
3.00 Wylam
3.30 Safeglide

Going: Good to soft (soft patches). ★ Denotes blinkers.

12.30 FESTIVE SPIRIT 'NH' NOVICE HURDLE (DIV I) 4YO 2m 2f £1,881

1 0-1 MERILENA (35) (C) G Hubbard 5-11-0 — K Gaule (3)
2 5P BARNSTORMER ● (45) E Elliott 9-10-12 — T Eley
3 264-64 CAMP BANK (38) N Twiston-Davies 5-10-12 — D Walsh (5)
4 0P/- CAPITAIN (665) A Jones 6-10-12 — S Curran (3)
5 3P DODGEM (24) M Wilkinson 7-10-12 — M Richards
6 00P/PP5- GAYTON RUN ● (222) S Campion 6-10-12 — P Midgley (3)
7 2-0F HATCHAM BOY (39) D Nicholson 6-10-12 — R Massey (5)
8 056 JUST ALBERT (24) Mrs J Pitman 5-10-12 — T Grantham
9 00/-050 KING'S COURTIER (24) S Mellor 6-10-12 — J Ryan

[illegible]

9 LINDA'S PRINCE (12) O Brennan 6-11-4 — O'Donnell (7)
10 OPTIMISTIC AFFAIR A Streeter 4-11-4 — T Eley
11 SAPPHOLIDE J Gifford 5-11-4 — Mr P O'Keeffe (7)
12 6 THE CAPTAIN'S WISH (27) D Nicholson 4-11-4 — R Massey (5)
13 5 COMPUTERAID LADY (18) R Curtis 5-10-13 — D Morris
14 30- FLEXWING (304) T Holland-Martin 6-10-13 — M Richards
15 ZEN OR J Mullins 4-10-13 — S Curran (3)

15 runners.

1994: No corresponding race

Betting: 4-1 Chai-Yo, 5-1 Bramley May, 6-1 Safeglide, 7-1 The Captain's Wish, 8-1 Blasterry Day, 10-1 Commuize.

● The meeting at Ayr on Boxing Day is in jeopardy due to an adverse weather forecast. Mark Kershaw, the track manager, said yesterday: "The course is raceable at the moment but there is a severe frost forecast and in view of that we will hold a precautionary inspection at 11.30 on Sunday morning."

Hereford

12.35 King Girseach
1.05 Potentate
1.35 Flying Imp
2.05 Trying Again
2.35 Hightown Cavalier
3.05 Ballydougan
3.35 Spring Saint

Going: Heavy. ★ Denotes blinkers.

12.35 TURKEY NOVICE HURDLE (DIV I) 2m 3f 110yds £2,528

1 1 KING GIRSEACH (55) K Bailey 6-11-5 — A Thornton
2 3412 LA MENORQUINA (24) D Marks 5-11-0 — D Gallagher
3 0-05 LORD LOFTY (19) Mrs J Pitman 5-10-12 — R Bellamy
4 05-0 RATATOUILLE ROAD (21) R Lee 5-10-12 — P McLoughlin
5 PP0 STRONG GLEN (10) P Wegmann 7-10-12 — S Fowler (7)
6 00/-0 THE MEXICANS GONE (26) D Geraghty 7-10-12 — V Slattery
7 0/-0 WOODYOU (29) F Jordan 5-10-12 — J Ladder
8 12-05 COOLE HILL (20) D Nicholson 4-10-7 — R Johnson (3)
9 2P303 MOONLIGHT AIR (10) J Spearing 4-10-7 — —

[illegible]

Betting: 3-1 Corrie Hill, 5-1 Spring Saint, 6-1 Fly By North, 8-1 Silver Standard, 10-1 My Swan Song, Dancing Dancer, 14-1 Project's Mate

● Two horses are set to lose races after traces of banned substances were found in their urine samples. Procaine and lignocaine were found in the Les Eyre-trained Greek Night Out, who beat Can She Can Can in the Skyram Handicap at Catterick on September 16. The prohibited substances phenylbutazone and oxyphenbutazone were found in the urine of the Mick Ryan-trained Stevie's Wonder after he beat Opera Buff in the Hurdlers Claiming Handicap at Salisbury on September 27. The findings were confirmed by independent foreign laboratories, and the Jockey Club's disciplinary committee will hold inquiries into both cases in due course.

Wetherby

12.50 Colonel In Chief
1.20 Valiant Warrior
1.50 Blackpatch Hill
2.20 Lo Stregone
2.50 Cumbrian Challenge
3.20 Owens Quest

Going: Good to soft. ★ Denotes blinkers.
Figures in brackets after horse's name denote days since latest N.H. outing

12.50 CHRISTMAS NOVICE HURDLE 2m £3,050

1 0-1 COLONEL IN CHIEF (29) (D) F Murphy 5-11-5 — P Carberry
2 3/-F ADMIRALS SEAT (17) M W Easterby 7-10-12 — J Driscoll
3 0 ARTWORLD (17) M W Easterby 7-10-12 — E Husband (3)
4 22/-3 BALNEBROOK (10) (BF) M H Easterby 6-10-12 — L Wyer
5 CRACKHILL FARM Mrs M Reveley 4-10-12 — N Smith
6 DAJRAAN N Twiston-Davies 6-10-12 — C Maude
7 0 EURO THYNE (17) M H Easterby 5-10-12 — R Garritty
8 645- GOLDEN TORQUE (662) R Bastiman 8-10-12 — H Bastiman (5)
9 00-236 LEGAL LORD (10) M Hammond 5-10-12 — D Bentley

[illegible]

9 0022/-05 ALMAMZAR ● ● (11) N Tinkler 5-10-5 — —
10 2030-5P THE GALLOPIN'MAJOR (24) Mrs M Reveley 5-10-4 — N Smith
11 P/544-16 JUMBO STAR (88) J Dixon 5-10-2 — W Newton (7)
12 000 LEAP IN THE DARK (10) Miss L Siddall 6-10-0 — C Maude
13 440-251 OWENS QUEST ● (24) (CD) T Etherington 5-10-0 — R Rourke (7)
14 0/00/- SCEPTICAL (681) J Glover 7-10-0 — J Callaghan
15 PP0-00U NO WORD (11) R Bastiman 8-10-0 — H Bastiman (5)
16 P00-2 MISTER TRICK (35) L Lungo 5-10-0 — DOUBTFUL

15 runners.

TOP FORM TIPS: Ela Man Howa 8, Rye Crossing 7, Alosi Sait 8 6

1994: Top Cees 4 9 12 D Thomas 4-1 (Mrs J R Ramsden) 7 ran

Betting: 9-2 Ela Man Howa, 5-1 Rye Crossing, 6-1 Owens Quest, 7-1 Tom Brodie, Desert Fighter, 8-1 Circus Line, 10-1 Alosi Soit It, Hunters' Heaven, 14-1 Jumbo Star

Wolverhampton

1.00 Cracking Idea
1.30 Addington Boy
2.00 CAPTAIN KHEDIVE (nap)
2.40 Weeheby
3.10 Amber Valley
3.40 Effies

Going: Good. ★ Denotes blinkers.
Figures in brackets after horse's name denote days since latest NH outing.

1.00 PERTEMPS NOVICE HANDICAP CHASE 2m 4f 110yds £5,623

1 1-23P1U SOPHISM (11) M Pipe 6-11-11 — Jamie Evans ★
2 24F-443 COSSLY SPECIAL (21) K Burke 8-11-9 — A Larnach (3) ★
3 2F-4121 JUDICIAL FIELD (11) N Tinkler 6-11-9 — J Railton
4 P/2PB3-2 EARLY DRINKER (12) O Sherwood 7-11-6 — J A McCarthy
5 2140U1 FENWICK (16) (D) R Hodges 8-11-4 — A Tory
6 321242 HERBERT BUCHANAN (7) P Nicholls 5-10-12 — A Dobbin
7 15-U5F3 CRACKING IDEA (32) J Edwards 7-10-7 — B Fenton (5)

7 runners

[illegible]

5 208-13 LET'S GET LOST ● (17) (D) J A Harris 6-11-4 — B Fenton (5)
6 1412- SARMATIAN (342) (D) M Hammond 4-10-12 — A Dobbin
7 14P14U SASSIVER ● ● (21) (D) P Kelleway 5-10-9 — G Hogan (3) ★
8 65-U244 THROWER (13) B Preece 4-10-9 — Gary Lyons
9 P111-46 DAILY SPORT GIRL (49) (D) B Llewellyn 6-10-3 — Mr J L Llewellyn
10 100531 CHRIS'S GLEN (13) (D) J Bradley 6-10-0 — B Clifford ★

10 runners

TOP FORM TIPS: Thrower 8, Effies 7, Windward Ariom 6

Betting: 7-2 Tejano Gold, 4-1 Effies, 5-1 Let's Get Lost, 6-1 Sassiver, 7-1 Windward Ariom, 8-1 Thrower, Chris's Glen, Sarmatian, 16-1 Daily Sport Girl.

● The Diadem Stakes at Ascot and Newmarket's Cherry Hinton Stakes, which has produced two of the last three 1,000 Guineas winners in Sayyedati and Harayir, are to be upgraded to Group Two status from next year.

Soccer

Fifa threatens bans for using unlicensed agents

John Duncan on why clubs and players must reassess whom they do business with

ENGLISH clubs face being banned from Europe, heavily fined and excluded from the transfer market if they continue to do business with unlicensed agents, Fifa will tell the Football Association next week. Players dealing with such agents will be suspended for up to 12 months and fined up to £30,000.

Those under threat include Eric Hall, who represents Dennis Wise, Neil Ruddock and John Scales as well as 30 other players; Steve Davies, who represents Vinnie Jones; Mel Stein and Len Lazarus, who deal with Paul Gascoigne; and about half a dozen other unregistered agents.

"We are very serious about this," said Fifa's legal department yesterday. "We are aware of the situation in England and we are now going to enforce the sanctions that exist in our regulations.

"We are not able to take any sanction against the agents but we are drawing the attention again of the clubs and players to what will happen to them. We have not taken any sanctions up to now but there will be serious sanctions from January 1."

Fifa's new tough stance was confirmed by Phil Smith of First Artist, a registered agent whose long client list includes Les Ferdinand and Ruud Gullit. "Someone is going to fall foul of this big time," said Smith, also involved with the Fifa recognised International Association of Football Agents. "If they are a club they could have the transfer fee impounded and a player could end up being suspended."

"I think it could put every club in the league in some difficulty," said Peter Robinson, Liverpool's chief executive. "At the moment there's very few transfers taking place and few new contracts being negotiated. With Bosman people have been sitting back waiting. But we have to take their threats seriously although we would welcome a tough line because it would be better to know where we stand."

To register, an agent has to be approved by Fifa and deposit a £110,000 bond in a Swiss bank account. Fifa's agent regulations give it the power to punish clubs with "a ban on all national and or international footballing activity". That would mean clubs being suspended from the Premier League and banned from Europe.

Fifa says it will also "suspend all or part of the management bodies". This may lead to world bans, like that meted out to George Graham, for any manager or chairman dealing with an unlicensed agent. The regulations also speak of "an interdiction to carry out national and/or international transfers" and "a fine of up to 100,000 Swiss francs [£60,000]".

However, there is a strong feeling in the game that Fifa could be humiliated if it attempts to enforce a rule that lawyers say is a clear restraint of trade. "I regard it as a typical Fifa hysterical reaction to try and retain the status quo," said Davies, an employment law specialist who is Jones's agent. "It's not the first time they have tried to impose their power to retain their position of strength. But the rule will only last as long as it takes someone to challenge it in the courts as unreasonable restraint of trade, which in my view it is."

Hall . . . agent under threat

Hall, whose position is under threat, was typically forthright in his rejection of Fifa's rules. "Basically nothing has changed for me. It's my work. The minute I get stopped for not having a licence, and I've taken advice from top lawyers in this country, then I will go for restraint of trade. If I am stopped from acting for them, then I think the player himself may take legal action against the FA and Fifa on freedom of choice."

Neil Robinson reports on growing trouble for Norwich's chairman

Injunction halts Megson's move

GARY MEGSON was last night prevented from taking up the manager's job at Norwich City after his former club Bradford City won a High Court injunction. The news came less than 10 hours after Megson had been paraded at a morning press conference at Carrow Road.

Bradford's chairman Geoffrey Richmond accused Norwich's chairman Robert Chase of making an illegal approach for Megson, who walked out on the Second Division club on Thursday less than a month after being appointed assistant manager.

Richmond said that Norwich were guilty of a "flagrant breach" of Football League rules, a charge which Chase refutes. However, pressure is building on Norwich's chairman, who is already the target of a supporters' group seeking his resignation.

Last night Richmond, who was earlier believed to want £100,000 compensation for Megson, said: "Bradford City have this evening been granted an injunction against Norwich City and Gary Megson, restraining Megson from working for them as manager or in any other capacity and restraining Norwich from so employing him.

"The order was granted by High Court Judge Mance sitting in the Royal Court of Justice in The Strand.

"The order lasts until Thursday next week when it is anticipated that Bradford will apply to extend the order after issuing a writ when the courts reopen on Wednesday."

The order means Megson cannot take up his post for Norwich's Christmas fixtures at Portsmouth today and at home to Southend on Boxing Day where demonstrations against Chase have been planned.

Norwich's chairman may now face a League inquiry: although Bradford have not formally complained, Richmond said the League had been kept fully informed.

The Independent Supporters Association was also active yesterday. A spokesman said that it is well on the way to securing 20,000 signatures on an anti-Chase petition and it has called for a spectator boycott of the Southend game. Yesterday 100 black balloons were placed over the entrance to Carrow Road where a huge banner was posted, reading: "Mr Chase there is only one thing on the agenda: please go".

● Bobby Smith yesterday walked out on Swansea less than three months after taking temporary charge at the Vetch Field.

Ferguson feels the white-hot breath of Spurs

David Lacey looks at the holiday fixtures and form and sees a possible new order

BY THE New Year Newcastle United should be that much closer to their first league title since 1927, the year Charles Lindbergh flew the Atlantic, leaving Manchester United to weigh the possibility of Andy Cole rediscovering the scoring form that brought him to Old Trafford against the likelihood of his being able to cross the pond in a bath tub.

It is nearly 12 months since the news broke that Alex Ferguson had persuaded Kevin Keegan to part with Cole, the scorer of 41 goals for Newcastle in the 1993-94 season, in a deal worth £7 million — £6 million cash plus Keith Gillespie, Ferguson's Northern Ireland winger. In the light of subsequent events it may be that Keegan merely needed persuading the United manager's call was not a hoax.

For, despite having shown promise at Old Trafford last season, scoring a dozen times in 17 Premiership appearances, Cole is now a forlorn figure. Forget the talk about his usefulness in going wide on the left. He was signed to fill opposing nets and this season that is something he has failed conspicuously to do.

A total of three goals with half the programme gone represents a poor return on Ferguson's investment. Last Sunday Cole was replaced by Paul Scholes early in the second half of United's game at Anfield. Will Ferguson keep him in his starting line-up for what would be a testing holiday programme for his side even if it was on song?

On Christmas Eve United are at Leeds, who hardly need a bigger incentive to reverse their own catastrophic form. Three days later Newcastle will visit Old Trafford, with Les Ferdinand, not to mention Gillespie, and trying hard not to look smug.

While Cole has struggled, despite the excellence of Ryan Giggs and return of Eric Cantona, Ferdinand has flourished in the company of Peter Beardsley and David Ginola, scoring 21 goals since moving to St James' Park from Queen's Park Rangers. If his goals take Newcastle into next season's Champions' League he will have been a snip at £6 million.

Keegan's team go into the holiday programme with a seven-point lead over United. By the New Year, however, the footsteps padding along behind them could belong to Tottenham Hotspur.

Spurs are the only side at present showing consistent form in the top half of the Premiership. All around them teams are stalling amid a plethora of draws as well as the odd — in Leeds's case extremely odd — defeat.

Admittedly Tottenham could not squeeze victories out of goalless encounters with Chelsea and Everton but they are usually winning. Despite losing Klinsmann and Barmby to Bayern Munich and Middlesbrough, as well as Darren Anderton's prolonged absence, Gerry Francis is reaping the rewards of his concentration on supreme fitness and sound defending rounded off by the burgeoning attacking partnership of Teddy Sheringham and Chris Armstrong.

Only Newcastle's consistency at home, which has brought nine straight league wins, has prevented Tottenham getting closer. But by the time Spurs are preparing for their third-round FA Cup tie with Hereford they could be second and closing.

Since being outplayed by Liverpool, who won 3–1 at White Hart Lane on August 28, Tottenham have lost once in 15 league matches, nine of which have been won. They have not conceded a goal in their last five games and, after facing Bolton at home today, travel to Southampton on Boxing Day and Blackburn the following weekend.

It does not take a wild imagination to foresee Spurs, who are only two points behind Manchester United, overhauling them before Ferguson's team come to White Hart Lane on New Year's Day. United's 2–0 defeat at Anfield followed three draws and was described by their manager as "one of the most lifeless Manchester United performances for years".

Ferguson needs to achieve a recovery as a matter of urgency if his Christmas is not to be blighted by Tottenham white. Not that Newcastle can afford to think complacently. Before the game at Old Trafford, Nottingham Forest, the season's draw specialists, visit St James' Park.

A week today Keegan takes his side to West Ham, where lapses in form are usually punished, and on January 2 Newcastle entertain an Arsenal team flagging in the absence of Dennis Bergkamp. Arsenal's match at Anfield looks the pick of today's games and Liverpool's trip to Villa Park the best of the Boxing Day fixtures.

With the top 10 teams in the First Division separated by four points the Christmas and New Year programme presents a bran tub of possibilities. The visit of the leaders Sunderland to second-placed Derby County this weekend is the game of most significance if one does not count the managerial musical chairs.

Tyne is on my side . . . Keith Gillespie, 20: the joke has it that Alex Ferguson is offering £6 million plus Andy Cole for the youngster ALLAN GLENWRIGHT

Gillespie eager for red-letter day

Michael Walker meets the Newcastle wing commander who intends to shoot down his former club at Old Trafford next week

NEWCASTLE United were in a rut. One win in nine games between the end of October and start of January had seen them fall from first to fifth in the table.

Their leading scorer Andy Cole had struck only once during the period and Kevin Keegan, understandably, was getting twitchy. Then the phone rang.

Alex Ferguson was on the line and the most sensational transfer of last season was under way. Its speed and audacity dumbfounded football.

Cole, the Geordie hero, was on his way to Manchester United and in return £6 million and the £1 million makeweight Keith Gillespie were travelling in the opposite direction.

Newcastle fans could not believe it and Keegan, barracked as he stood on the steps of St James' Park, was having trouble explaining his motives.

Eleven months on the reservations have vanished. The money Keegan received for Cole helped purchase Les Ferdinand; and the other part of the deal, Gillespie, has been crucial to the new striker's success.

Now the latest joke on Tyneside has Ferguson ringing Keegan to see if Gillespie is available. Keegan asks what Ferguson is offering and the reply comes: "£Six million plus Andy Cole."

It is a joke that makes Gillespie chuckle, but not too heartily. He displays the fellow professional's concern for Cole's goalscoring malaise and says: "Once he gets one it should start falling for him. It's hard with a big price tag but he's definitely a quality player."

On Wednesday the two meet on the pitch for the first time since the transfer. Last season Newcastle had gone to Old Trafford unbeaten in the first 11 games and were defeated 2–0, Gillespie scoring for the Reds.

Both were pulled out of the St James' Park encounter that immediately followed their moves, which makes the game Gillespie's first against the club he was with from the age of 12. The prospect provokes no sentimentality in the 20-year-old. "Things are going too well here," he says. "I know myself I've made the right choice in coming here. I can't really look back: I'd been a Manchester United fan all my life but I was surprised at how quickly I converted."

He keeps in touch with the lads he shared digs with in Salford and speaks to Gary Neville regularly on the phone but inevitably he has matured.

Over the summer stories of late-night revelry in Gosforth, added to the revelation that he broke a curfew on Northern Ireland's tour of Canada, seemed to point to a wild-child image.

A series of heart-to-hearts with Brian Marwood of the Professional Footballers' Association — Gillespie is advised by his union rather than an agent — led to a letter of apology to the international manager Bryan Hamilton.

Marwood says: "Keith is very sensible and intelligent but he was doing what most 20-year-olds do. He had to realise that he's in a profession where people examine everything you do."

Gillespie insists "everything's fine now" and "I've just got to get on with it". To the pleasure of Newcastle, he has done this. Keegan's faith in Gillespie led to the biggest endorsement the Irishman has received in the past few months — the selling of Ruel Fox.

"I knew it was going to be a battle," says Gillespie of Fox's role on the Newcastle right. "I was on the sidelines against Celtic pre-season but after that I played at Tottenham and thought I did well. I'm not surprised Ruel left because at his age he doesn't want to be sitting on the bench."

Keegan has rewarded Gillespie's consistency with an extended contract to 1999, heaping praise on his young winger. "He was good when he came here," says Keegan.

"The Cole deal would not have happened if Keith had not been part of it. And the way he is improving you can see him developing into one of the most exciting players in Europe.

"He is a very genuine, uncomplicated boy who wants to learn and improve and, with his pace and courage down the right-hand side, and David Ginola [Gillespie's room-mate] on the left, we can attack effectively from every angle. I'm really delighted with Keith — don't forget he's not 21 until February."

Keegan is not the only one to highlight Gillespie's courage. Rather surprisingly Nobby Stiles has said that, if he had one reservation about Gillespie, it would be his fearlessness. Stuart Pearce of Nottingham Forest should provide a useful test this afternoon.

With the opposition increasingly doubling up to counter the threat of him and Ginola, Gillespie has begun to counter by using the right-back Warren Barton rather than trying to beat players and losing possession. He realises football is a team game and has full confidence in his colleagues.

"We go out thinking we're going to win every game," Gillespie says. "We think we've got the squad and I think there's more self-belief here now. That's the difference from last season. I'm not sure if it was really there. If we play to the top of our game we are too strong for anybody." The true test will come on Wednesday.

Clubs pick and mix

THE list of foreigners playing in the Premiership has multiplied this season with eight clubs now able to field at least four imports immediately.

Although the mix of European Union and non-EU nationals differs, Bolton, Chelsea, Coventry, Leeds, Manchester City, Middlesbrough, Newcastle and West Ham could all breach the previous regulations.

Of these, Bolton, Chelsea and West Ham could pick five non-British-born players if they include assimilated players — those resident in the United Kingdom for more than five years.

Manchester City's managing director Colin Barlow led the chorus of approval at yesterday's decision. "I'm shocked but I'm over the moon," he said. "The feeling we had coming from the Premiership was that it was highly unlikely but we always hoped that European Law would take precedence.

"We have four games over the next 10 days and we are not in the healthiest position in the league. I wanted to give our manager the opportunity to put in an extra man.

"It also gives us the option to pick up talent from abroad which is less expensive. This would be good for English football in the long term because we're not getting the right type of coaching here."

Here is a full list of the Premiership's imports.

Arsenal — **EU:** Bergkamp, Helder (both Hol), Jensen (Den).
Aston Villa — **Non-EU:** Bosnich (Aus), Milosevic (Serb).
Blackburn Rovers — **Non-EU:** Berg (Nor), Bohinen (Nor), Tallz (Aus).
Bolton Wanderers — **EU:** DeFreitas (Hol), Sneekers (Hol). **Non-EU:** Bergsson (Ice), Curcic (Serb).
Chelsea — **EU:** Gullit (Hol), Kjeldbjerg (Den). **Non-EU:** Kharine (Rus), Petrescu (Rom).
Coventry City — **EU:** Isaias (Brazilian-born but Portuguese national). **Non-EU:** Batista (Angola), Filan (Aus), Lamptey (Ghana), Ndlovu (Zim).
Everton — **Non-EU:** Kanchelskis (Ukr), Amokachi (Nigeria).
Leeds United — **EU:** Brolin (Swe). **Non-EU:** Masinga (SA), Radebe (SA), Yeboah (Ghana).
Liverpool — **EU:** Stensgaard (Den). **Non-EU:** Bjornbye (Nor).
Manchester City — **EU:** Ekelund (Den), Immel, Rösler (both Ger). **Non-EU:** Kinkladze (Georgia).
Manchester United — **EU:** Cantona (Fr), Schmeichel (Den).
Middlesbrough — **EU:** Bagayoko (Fr). **Non-EU:** Fjortoft (Nor), Juninho (Bra), Moreno (Bol).
Newcastle United — **EU:** Albert (Bel), Ginola (Fr). **Non-EU:** Hottiger (Swi), Srnicek (Cz Rep).
Nottingham Forest — **EU:** Roy (Hol), Silenzi (It). **Non-EU:** Haaland (Nor).
Queens Park Rangers — **EU:** Dykstra (Hol). **Non-EU:** Goodridge (Barbados), McDermott (Aus), Sommer (US).
Sheffield Wednesday — **EU:** Degryse (Bel). **Non-EU:** Kovacevic (Serb), Stefanovic (Serb).
Southampton — None.
Tottenham Hotspur — **Non-EU:** Dumitrescu (Rom).
West Ham United — **EU:** Boogers (Hol), Rieper (Den). **Non-EU:** Lazaridis, Slater (both Aus).
Wimbledon — **Non-EU:** Leonhardsen (Nor).

● The following have all been resident in the United Kingdom for more than five years and are not classified as foreigners: Yorke (Villa), Paatelainen (Bolton), Johnsen (Chelsea), Kearton, Limpar (Everton), Molby (Liverpool), Monkou, Grobbelaar (Southampton), Rosenthal, Thorstvedt (Tottenham), Miklosko (West Ham), Segers (Wimbledon).

TEAM SHEET

Coventry City v Everton

Coventry will be without Ndlovu, still recovering from the eye injury he sustained in last Saturday's 4–1 defeat by Aston Villa. Ogrizovic returns in goal after suspension. Whelan will start and Lamptey comes into midfield. Everton are expected to name an unchanged starting line-up with Rideout replacing Ferguson (flu) among the substitutes.

Liverpool v Arsenal

Liverpool will be unchanged as Babb has failed a test on his injured thigh. Arsenal replace the suspended centre-backs Adams and Bould with Keown and Linighan.

Manchester City v Chelsea

City will be missing the suspended midfielders Flitcroft and Lomas but will put the new signing Ronnie Ekelund on the bench. Chelsea have Gullit back in their squad after five weeks out with a calf strain but he is unlikely to start. Burley has undergone arthroscopic knee surgery and will be out until the new year.

Middlesbrough v West Ham

Middlesbrough have a problem with their midfield: Barmby (Achilles tendon), Hignett (hernia) and Mustoe (knee) are out and Stamp has a late test on a damaged ankle. Bryan Robson could choose himself to fill in or may prefer Craig Liddle. West Ham will be without Martin (hamstring), so Rieper and Potts will fill the central defensive positions with Breacker at right-back.

Newcastle v Nottm Forest

If the game goes ahead, Newcastle may be without Lee (flu). Forest will bring back Lyttle in place of Phillips at right-back. Silenzi (hamstring) may not be fit to take a place among the substitutes.

QPR v Aston Villa

Ray Wilkins is likely to pick himself for QPR after transferring Osborn to Wolves. Villa may have to abandon their three centre-back system, as McGrath (groin) heads a list of injured defenders that leaves only Southgate and Ehiogu fit to play in central defence. And their top scorer Yorke is doubtful with a broken nose.

Sheff Wed v Southampton

Wednesday have included their two new signings from Red Star Belgrade, the striker Darko Kovacevic and left-back Dejan Stefanovic, in their squad but may prefer to keep the side that beat Leeds 6–2 last week. Whittingham, the striker turned midfielder, has an ankle sprain and faces a fitness test. Southampton have Le Tissier (calf) unlikely to play. Benali (flu) struggling and Bennett (hamstring) out.

Tottenham v Bolton

Spurs may give Steve Slade the chance to partner Armstrong in attack if Sheringham's back injury rules him out. Wilson replaces Austin (suspended) and Campbell (ankle) and Dozzell (knee) are unlikely to play. Bolton include the newly signed striker Nathan Blake.

Wimbledon v Blackburn

Wimbledon can bring back their central defender Andy Pearce, who has recovered from a back injury. Blackburn will leave out their central defender Ian Pearce, who has undergone ankle surgery, and their left-back Graeme Le Saux, whose broken ankle is likely to put him out for the rest of the season. Chris Coleman is likely to make his debut in place of Pearce.

TOMORROW

Leeds v Manchester United

Leeds will have Yeboah fit after throat and chest infections and may bring back Deane to partner him in attack. Manchester United can revamp their central midfield after their 2–0 defeat at Liverpool: Butt returns after suspension to replace Sharpe or McClair and Keane is fit again and may also be recalled.

Performance of the week: Kevin Francis (Birmingham City), whose two goals against Middlesbrough sent his team to the quarter-finals of the Coca-Cola Cup.

Ireland may fix manager by January 15

THE Republic of Ireland may appoint a managerial successor to Jack Charlton, who resigned on Thursday, as early as January 15. A host of names have been suggested, ranging from Mick McCarthy to Sepp Piontek.

Sean Connolly, the FAI chief executive, said: "The job will not be advertised. Our executive meeting will take place on January 2 and set out the terms of reference for the man we want as manager. Essentially it will be a head-hunting operation and we hope to interview as many people as possible after soundings have been made."

It is expected that two senior officers will start their interviews early in the New Year and report back to a full council meeting on January 15 for rubber-stamp approval. "We would like to have the new manager in place by January 23 when our World Cup meeting takes place in Liechtenstein," explained Connolly.

The Football Association yesterday ruled out a rematch between England and the Republic in February, a year after the riot-affected friendly in Dublin between the two countries.

Middlesbrough received a boost yesterday when it was announced that Juninho was one of a number of young players overlooked by Brazil for the Concacaf Gold Cup in the United States next month. Ronaldo and Roberto Carlos have also been left out by the coach Mario Zagalo.

The Everton striker Duncan Ferguson will next month know the outcome of a judicial review to determine his immediate future. The hearing, granted at the club's request, will take place on January 19 and not in March as expected.

Everton claim that Ferguson will have been punished twice for the same head-butting offence if he has to complete a Scottish FA-imposed ban having already spent six weeks in prison. If the claim is not upheld he must serve out the remaining seven games of a 12-match ban.

Bournemouth have denied that they face a financial crisis, despite bouncing a cheque for £9 issued as a refund to a supporter who was unhappy with a bonfire night display at the ground.

A N Other

FOR a decade and a half this amiable Berkshireman brought strength and stability to a number of defences on either side of the Thames. He left the capital once, and then only for a short time to count sheep. Blue was his colour at beginning and end. He also wore the same set of rings twice, and did some glazing in between.

Last week: Frank Stapleton (Arsenal, Manchester United, Ajax, Derby County, Le Havre, Blackburn Rovers, Aldershot, Huddersfield Town, Bradford City, Brighton and Hove Albion).

Soccer

Walk if you can manage it

Soccer Diary

Martin Thorpe

OKAY, now let's get this right. Mark McGhee, who walked out on Reading to take the job at Leicester, then walks out on Leicester to take the job at Wolves.

Martin O'Neill, who had walked out on Wycombe, then walks out on Norwich to take the job at Leicester and finds himself in competition with Mike Walker, who had previously walked out on Norwich to succeed Howard Kendall at Everton.

Walker rules himself out of the Luton job while he waits for Leicester's phone call, which never comes, and meanwhile Luton appoint Lennie Lawrence, who was recently sacked by Bradford and partly replaced by Gary Megson who then goes to Norwich and then does not.

Now prior to all this Kendall, who had walked out on Manchester City to take the job at Everton, was appointed manager of Sheffield United following Dave Bassett's walk-out allegedly to make himself also available for the job at Leicester.

Bassett had previously been manager of Watford, succeeding Graham Taylor who left for Aston Villa, now managed by Brian Little after he walked out on Leicester who replaced him with McGhee, now at Wolves after they sacked Taylor.

And you thought Bosman was confusing.

OKAY, what is the difference between Peter Davis, the Lottery regulator, and Mike Walker. Davis knew he was being taken for a ride.

THERE they are, Vinny Samways and Gary Ablett, smiling representatives of Everton, pictured on the front cover of the January edition of Evertonian, the club's official magazine. Oops. Samways has just gone on loan to Wolves and Ablett has been put on the transfer list.

CONFUSED by the Bosman ruling? Well, no wonder. Everybody has misinterpreted it totally. Basically it is quite simple.

First of all the European Court is not talking about ending transfer fees for players who are out of contract but for players who are out of contact. Basically this means that no fee can be paid for a player who has his answer-machine on when the European Commission rings him up.

Similarly the European Court's edict that players should have total freedom of movement has nothing to do with transfers but means a player with the ball would have an unimpeded route to goal. So tackles, or any bodily contact, is now banned. And any goalkeeper who makes a save will be immediately sent off.

Finally, the European Court's ruling has not made a distinction between foreign players and players born within the EU but between players to whom the game is foreign and born-players within the EU.

Therefore teams can now only field players with natural talent. One-footed players or anyone incapable of pinging a 40-yard pass to feet are banned. The English game's governing bodies have lodged a formal complaint.

AS COLEMANBALLS go, Radio 5 Live's Ron Jones was in fine form for last Sunday's game between Liverpool and Manchester United. Referring to Andy Cole's goalscoring problems he opined: "You don't score 68 goals in 84 games in the Premiership without being able to score goals." (heard by David Isaacs of Whitley Bay).

RONNIE EKELUND is almost certain to make his debut on loan for Manchester City today. He had been in talks about a similar move to Birmingham City. But it fell through. Of course, Barry Fry was reluctant to criticise the player for the breakdown: "He took us for a ride, has no ethics, is driven by money and, as far as I am concerned, we are better rid of him," he said.

TROUBLE at Molineux: Mark McGhee is claiming his loyalty bonus is overdue.

AND a very merry Christmas to you all.

RUGBY UNION: PILKINGTON CUP, FOURTH ROUND

Saints alive . . . Ian McGeechan and his captain Tim Rodber look forward to the chance to test Northampton's improvement PHOTOGRAPH: MIKE BRETT

McGeechan plots to sink Bath

Robert Armstrong on the Saints coach hoping to pull the plug on the holders today

NO COACH in the Courage League is better equipped to throw down the gauntlet to Bath than Ian McGeechan.

The former Scotland and Lions guru, who took over as Northampton's director of rugby 14 months ago, has faced up to this type of challenge many times at international level, having prepared previously unrated sides to take on France, New Zealand and Australia on their own patch.

Bath, the Pilkington Cup holders, are expected to call the shots at The Rec against the League Two leaders today. But the supermen of English club competition will be tested tactically and physically in ways they are likely to find unfamiliar. Geech is a proven master at springing a series of small surprises which cumulatively sometimes produce a major upset.

"This fixture offers us a measure of how well we've been playing this season," said McGeechan, whose team have won a maximum 10 league games to date, scoring an aggregate 526 points.

"It has been awkward not having the squad together for five weeks due to international calls. But I think we've evolved a style in league matches that hopefully will move us forward as a club.

"Bath have shown once again that they are the best side in the country and we know we'll have to compete for 80 minutes to stay in touch. They are very good at playing without the ball, then counter-attacking and scoring points off your possession.

"As the game progresses we will attempt to gain some advantages, translate them into tries or penalties and, with a bit of luck, finish up in front."

Typically McGeechan has turned the setback of relegation last spring to his advantage, seizing the opportunity to remould a side that had flourished in the early Nineties under the massive influence of Wayne Shelford and then waned after his departure.

In his first season McGeechan would "have much preferred to stay in League One" but he admits the drop forced him to set standards and "lift everything up a level", which is why he decided to stay at Northampton last summer instead of travelling with the Scots to South Africa for the World Cup.

It says a great deal about McGeechan's passion for the game that he threw up a secure job with Scottish Life in Edinburgh and uprooted his family from their home in Leeds to devote himself to the Saints during a tricky period of transition.

Admittedly his salary is around £50,000 a year and Northampton are blessed with eight internationals and a home gate of about 5,000. But the shock of relegation swiftly underlined the precarious nature of his new post.

At 48 McGeechan has no regrets, though a few seasons ago a twinge of rancour would have been understandable after the Scottish Rugby Union engaged his long-time colleague Jim Telfer as its director of rugby.

After all, the former Leeds schoolteacher had guided Scotland to a Grand Slam in 1990, sandwiched between Lions tours to Australia (1989) and New Zealand (1993), where he emerged as an outstanding motivator.

No doubt the Saints head-hunted McGeechan primarily because of his enthusiastic commitment to bringing out the talent in young players. As he sits in his tiny office with a cheese sandwich and an apple for his evening meal, McGeechan's head is filled not with balance sheets and building permits, which preoccupy some of his rivals, but with the analysis of playing resources that has become his hallmark. "Dropping down a division injected more realism into the club," he explained. "We've had to work better and work harder. Playing a league game and then training quickly followed by another game has helped us develop a pattern of play.

"We have also been fortunate in not picking up key injuries which has made it easier to be consistent and to maintain the standard I was seeking from the start of the season.

"It gives tremendous satisfaction to see players come through and realise their true potential. Obviously the form of the half-backs Dawson and Grayson, which got them into the England team, has been very pleasing, especially for the way it enables them to achieve their individual goals. The surprising thing is that we've gone further down the line than I expected to begin with — all the players can take credit for that.

"We have a number of young players around the 21 or 22 mark who are making an important contribution. Our loose-head Matt Volland is a strong lad who is shaping up well — he is good with the ball in his hands as well as being an excellent scrummager.

"John Phillips at lock has a big appetite for work around the park and Budge Pountney is a genuine open-side with impressive all-round awareness. Grant Seeley won't be far off representative rugby within a year or two."

Given McGeechan's belief that players rather than coaches or tactical systems decide games, his switch from international rugby to the club scene was manna from heaven. "Here I've got to know all the players very well, which you can't always do with an international squad given the limit on time.

"Northampton are very much a town side, very friendly, a bit like a Border club, in fact. That's something you know you can build on." Bath may very well discover it when the Saints come marching in.

Top London clubs at risk in North

Robert Armstrong

WASPS and Harlequins could come to grief today when they meet Sale and Orrell respectively in the only League One clashes in the fourth round of the Pilkington Cup. But another London club, Saracens, should make home advantage pay at the expense of Rugby from League Three.

Sale's injury list ought not to stop the Cheshire side joining in a high-scoring extravaganza with Wasps, even though the north Londoners have adopted a more conservative style this season. Quins, without their injured locks Alex Snow and Peter Thresher, are likely to concentrate on survival at Orrell, who have Charles Cusani back in the second row.

Brian Davies, the Saracens captain, is one of five players who have been struggling to overcome injuries this week. If he fails today's fitness test Tony Diprose will be captain.

Exeter from League Three will hold no fears for Leicester, who beat the Devon club 76–0 in a quarter-final at Welford Road three seasons ago. This time the score at the County Ground may be closer due to a heavy pitch which might slow down the Tigers' flying wings.

Northampton are without two Ulster players for their televised clash with the holders Bath at the Recreation Ground. The hooker Allan Clarke and the centre Jonathan Bell play in the Irish provincial championship decider against Leinster at Donnybrook.

Bath name Simon Geoghegan and Jonathan Sleightholme on the wings while the England full-back Mike Catt returns at fly-half and Ian Sanders is preferred at scrum-half to Andy Nicol.

Western-super-Mare may fancy their chances at home to West Hartlepool, notwithstanding a difference of four divisions in status. But the visitors, who have recalled the forwards Alan Brown and Rob Wainwright, should surely put their dismal league form behind them.

Reading are likely to offer stiff resistance before succumbing to Bristol while Rob Andrew's Newcastle Gosforth may struggle against Moseley despite home advantage.

Results

Soccer

ENDSLEIGH LEAGUE: Second Division: Postponed: Carlisle v York.

Rugby Union

INTERNATIONAL MATCH: Scottish Schools 12, French Schools 18.

TENNENTS INTER DISTRICT CHAMPIONSHIP: Postponed: Edinburgh Dist v North & Midlands.

Basketball

NBA: Charlotte 107, Boston 97; Utah 89, Cleveland 87; Houston 91, Portland 88; San Antonio 114, Denver 96; Seattle 92, Vancouver 68; Los Angeles Clippers 103, Sacramento 96.

Chess

LEIGH GRAND PRIX (corrected): 1, M Sadler (Chatham) 192.3/200; 2, K Arkell (Derby) 192.2; 3, S Conquest (Bristol) 186.3.

GRONINGEN TOURNAMENT (Neth): **Round 3:** P Leko (Hun) ½, P Svidler (Rus) ½; L van Wely (Neth), G Kamsky (US) ½; I Sokolov (Bos) 1, Z Almasi (Hun) 0; M Adams (Eng) 1, C Hansen (Den) 0; L Lautier (Fr) ½, A Karpov (Rus) ½, Piket (Neth) ½, S Tiviakov (Rus) ½. **Leaders:** Van Wely 2½; Adams, Kamsky, Sokolov 2.

Cricket

TOUR MATCH: Pietermaritzburg: Combined SA Universities 269–6 dec (N Pothas 147, N Boje 51; Ilott 6–89). England 188–2 (A J Stewart 89no; M A Atherton 50). No play yesterday. Match abandoned as a draw.

Ice Hockey

NHL: Florida 6, Winnipeg 1; New York Rangers 2, Philadelphia 1; New Jersey 2, Tampa Bay 2 (ot). Toronto 3, Chicago 3 (ot); New York Islanders 3, Dallas 3 (ot).

Alpine Skiing

MEN'S WORLD CUP (Kranjska Gora): **Slalom:** 1 A Tomba (It) 1min 36.84sec 2 J Kosir (Slo) 1 38.05 3 S Amiez (Fr) 1,38 43 **Standings:** 1, Tomba 260pts; 2, Amiez 240; 3, Kosir 165. **Overall:** 1, L Kjus (Nor) 785pts; 2, M Von Gruenigen (Switz) 496; 3, H Knaus (Aut) 377. **Nations' Cup standings:** 1, Austria 4,478pts; 2, Switzerland 2,702; 3, Italy 1,872.

WOMEN'S WORLD CUP (Veysonnaz): **Slalom:** 1, P Wiberg (Swe) 1min 14.42sec; 2, U Hrovat (Slo) 1.14.72; 3, K Andersson (Swe) 1.14.73. **Standings:** 1, E Eder (Aut) 200pts; 2, Hrovat 192; 3, K Koren (Slo) 150. **Overall:** 1, A Meissnitzer (Aut) 488pts; 2, A Wachter (Aut) 463; 3, M Ertl (Ger) 433.

● Two National Football League players have been fined for fighting during a match in Buffalo last Sunday and for continuing the altercation afterwards. The Miami Dolphins linebacker Bryan Cox was fined nearly £12,000 and the Buffalo Bills running back Carwell Gardner £10,000 after being sent off with under two minutes left of the Bills' 23–20 victory. Gardner then chased Cox into the Dolphins' dressing room before being apprehended by security officers. Gardner still did not give up and went looking for Cox on the Dolphins' bus.

● Two more French soccer players have failed dope tests, bringing the total this season to five. The French Football Federation refused to name them but the sports daily L'Equipe claimed they were the defenders Oumar Dieng of Paris St Germain and Gilles Hampartzoumian of Cannes. The Federation's president, Claude Simonet, revealed that the drugs involved were not performance-enhancing and were of a kind obtained by young people "for recreational purposes".

Senegal, meanwhile, have appointed the German Peter Schnittger as national soccer technical director. Schnittger, an adviser at the ministry of youth and sport, will hold the job for three years and his first move was to name Lamine Dieng as national coach, a post he held two years ago. Senegal have failed to qualify for the African Nations Cup finals in South Africa next month.

● Nigel Benn's world-title fight against the American Gerald McClellan last February has won the year's battle of the sport's TV ratings. ITV said 13.1 million viewers watched the fight in which McClellan suffered brain damage during a bruising WBC super-middleweight contest at the London Arena.

Sport in brief

Rugby Union

Kevin Ellis, the Wales and Great Britain rugby league scrum-half, will return to his former code on Boxing Day when he makes his debut for Maesteg against his old club Bridgend. Ellis, who was out of contract with Warrington while awaiting the start of the league's Super League season in Australia, has finally been able to satisfy the Welsh Rugby Union that he is a free agent.

Chess

Michael Adams, the British No. 2, advanced into second place in the Groningen tournament when he defeated Curt Hansen of Denmark in a 41-move Sicilian defence, *writes Leonard Barden*. Loek van Wely of the Netherlands kept the overall lead.

Basketball

Billy Singleton will not be able to play for the Chester Jets tonight at Bracknell because of a delay in processing his work permit application. But the 6ft 7in former Birmingham Bullet, who has been playing in Israel, expects to be available to join the Budweiser League's last-placed team next week.

Tennis

Man guilty of Becker threat

A MAN who threatened to kill Boris Becker and his family in a bizarre extortion case was convicted by a Munich court yesterday and given a suspended two-year sentence. Michael Jung, aged 29, was also ordered to start psychiatric treatment.

The prosecutors had requested a four-year sentence but the court accepted the defendant's statement that he never intended to carry out his threats.

The court found Jung guilty of calling Becker's manager Axel Meyer-Woelden a dozen times between March 1994 and February 1995 and threatening to kill Becker, his wife Barbara and their son in a "great massacre".

Jung wanted Meyer-Woelden to fix the state lottery so that his combination of numbers would win the jackpot. He never explained how he thought Becker's manager could influence the public drawing of the numbers.

Jung, who had worked as a tennis teacher, said he needed the money to pay debts and help young tennis players.

Motor Racing

Hakkinen raring to race again

THE Finnish racing driver Mika Hakkinen, recovering at his Monaco home from a crash in Adelaide six weeks ago which almost cost him his life, said yesterday that "he could not wait" to race again next season.

Hakkinen, who fractured the base of his skull in qualifying for the Australian Grand Prix on November 10, said: "The spark is back within me in a big way. Now I am thinking only about racing, about getting back to this sport I love so much. No one is going to enjoy Christmas more than I will. As for the New Year, I can't wait. I feel great."

Hakkinen added that he was driving his own Mercedes around Monaco and had been told that he could drive his McLaren team car from the end of January. "But at the moment I'm not aiming for anything beyond getting back to my old physical condition by taking long walks and using an exercise bike."

Cricket

Dry run for fourth Test washed out

Vic Marks sees the selectors frustrated in Pietermaritzburg

A STARTLING sight greeted early arrivals here yesterday. The covers had been removed and in the middle of the square stood a forlorn groundsman clutching a hosepipe and flooding the wicket. It was, of course, pouring with rain at the time and the tour match against the Combined Universities XI had already been abandoned.

Given the nature of the pitch and Thursday's dreary fare, there were few howls of dismay from those obliged to play or watch.

In the bad old days an early finish would have been the cue for a vigorous game of football on the outfield. But that is now deemed to be too frivolous and too risky. Instead it was straight back to Durban before any more landslides blocked the freeway. England's new men — as well as Raymond Illingworth — were eager to rejoin the wives, sweethearts and toddlers who have recently arrived with Christmas presents and their redundant bottles of suntan lotion.

Now that the England entourage has expanded so attractively, Mike Atherton announced: "I've made a point of reminding the players what we are here for." Who knows how poor Mark Ramprakash interpreted his captain's cautionary words? Maybe he has resolved to carry out the drinks with a smile until the Cape Town Test, when the tour party will be reshuffled to accommodate the one-day specialists.

Weather permitting, the team will practise on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day in Port Elizabeth but the forecast remains gloomy. Peter Martin, who has been nursing a sore shoulder, could have bowled yesterday if he had some galoshes but now he will have to confirm his fitness in the nets. "It would have been useful to see Peter bowl again here but we think he'll be okay for the Test," said Atherton.

The captain, moreover, seemed unperturbed by Jason Gallian's dislocated finger or his failure to score more than three against the students. "Jason has probably played more cricket than most of us recently, albeit in Pakistan."

However, Gallian is not certain to play in Port Elizabeth. "If it looks like a two-spinner pitch we are prepared to play five batsmen," said Atherton. In which case Robin Smith would bat at No. 3 with Jack Russell and Mike Watkinson at No. 6 and No. 7.

"If it happens I will relish the challenge," said Russell. "But I wouldn't try to change how I'm batting. I play my own game these days and that's the way I must continue."

Russell has a batting average of almost 80 on this tour, much to the delight of Illingworth. "Jack's powers of concentration match Mike Atherton's and he is very good at geeing up team-mates — just like an old-fashioned senior pro," he said.

Another Test cap would represent an unexpected Christmas bonus for Watkinson, who has struggled for rhythm and control on this tour. It is also hard to envisage the existence of a spinner's dust bowl anywhere in this sodden country.

Since the tourists arrived eight days' first-class cricket — including five during the three Tests — have been washed away without a ball being bowled. The 112 previous Tests on South African soil have produced only 11 completely blank days due to bad weather.

Discarded Blewett rebounds with a century off the West Indians

GREG BLEWETT, the all-rounder discarded by the Australia Test selectors, gave them a reminder of his ability with a century in Brisbane yesterday as the West Indies struggled for form again.

Blewett, dropped from the Test side before the current three-Test series against Sri Lanka, punished a weakened West Indies attack in scoring 115 before the youthful Australia XI declared their first innings on 323 for seven.

The West Indies openers Stuart Williams (16) and Phil Simmons (17) survived the final hour to guide the tourists to 37 without loss at close of play on the first day of their three-day match at The Gabba.

West Indies, still looking for their first win since they began their tour early this month, rested their three main pace bowlers, Ambrose, Bishop and Walsh. Otis Gibson (three for 68) and Anderson Cummins shared the new ball.

Sailing

Jury decision provokes pull-out threat

Bob Fisher

SEVERAL yacht owners yesterday threatened to pull out of the classic Sydney-Hobart race when the international jury overturned the Cruising Yacht Club's decision to give a one per cent time allowance in the cruiser and racer division.

The Sydney club's initial decision on the allowance came after it had issued the original Notice of Race, its sailing committee believing that older yachts built before December 31, 1992 would be perceptibly slower and should be encouraged with a greater handicap benefit. The owners of nine other yachts, however, claimed the committee's action had prejudiced their chances.

The international jury based its decision on finding that the Notice of Race constituted a contract with the yacht owners and the organising authority and that the change affected many parties with differing interests.

Don Mickleborough, 70, whose 56-year-old Southerly yacht won the veteran division last year, and might justifiably claim an allowance, is strongly against the international jury's decision but agreed not to withdraw so as not to disappoint his crew.

One hundred yachts have entered for this year's race and only a small percentage would not have received the time allowance. It seems the CYC may have shot itself in the foot for not including the allowance in the Notice of Race.

Certainly the international measurement system, under which the race is handicapped, allows for this and all cruisers and racers in the Rolex Commodores' Cup at Cowes in July will receive a 1.5 per cent allowance over the more advantaged grand prix racers.

Skiing

Tomba driven by fury to 46th victory

ALBERTO TOMBA won the race he was going to boycott. He left a field led by the local favourite Jure Kosir 1.21sec behind yesterday in taking the World Cup slalom at Kranjska Gora.

After pulling out of Thursday's giant slalom on the same Podkoren course and threatening to skip yesterday's slalom in his annoyance at the organisation of the races at the Slovenian resort, Tomba was fired up for the 46th World Cup win of his career. It moved him past Marc Girardelli into second place on the all-time list behind Ingemar Stenmark, who won 86 times in the 1970s and 1980s.

Tomba, infuriated by the decision to restart Thursday's giant slalom from scratch after fog interrupted racing, had refused to return to the start, claiming that lack of snow made the course dangerous.

Pernilla Wiberg recovered spectacularly from 13th place in the first leg yesterday to win the World Cup slalom at Veysonnaz.

The former Olympic giant slalom champion started third in the 47-gate second leg, then watched with increasing elation from the finish area as rival after rival failed to match her time.

Her compatriot Kristina Andersson, who led after the first leg, slipped back to third place overall, 0.31sec behind. Urska Hrovat squeezed into second, 0.01sec ahead of Andersson.

Wiberg said she had felt "under pressure" because of her disappointing start to the season, but her poor first run lifted any burden of expectation off her. "In the second run I felt I had nothing to lose," she said, "and so I just attacked."

Yesterday's race was added to the Veysonnaz programme after being postponed from Lake Louise last month.

Ten Boxing Day race meetings, pages 8-9

England suffer another wash-out, page 11

SportsGuardian

Premiership sparks foreigner free-for-all

Martin Thorpe on the shock move to lift barriers to EU players

THE Premier League yesterday flew in the face of advice from Uefa and Fifa by unilaterally scrapping, from today, the limit on the number of European Union players a team can field in the Premiership.

As a result of the PL's interpretation of part of the Bosman ruling Gordon Taylor, leader of the players' union, said he would now have to advise those of his members who were out of contract that they could move abroad without a transfer fee.

On top of this Uefa and Fifa had hours earlier put themselves on a collision course with the European Commission by refusing Brussels' request to implement the whole Bosman ruling immediately.

The PL made its decision to implement part of the ruling now after consulting with two specialist QCs. One immediate beneficiary of the change is Manchester City, who have been fighting to play their four imports in today's game against Chelsea. On Thursday they threatened a legal challenge to the Bosman ruling, faxed the European Commission for clarification of the foreigner rule and were given the green light to play as many EU players as they liked — a verdict confirmed by the PL, as its chief executive Rick Parry announced yesterday.

"The legal advice we have received makes clear that rules which attempt to limit the number of EU nationals are unenforceable in the light of the Bosman judgment," he said. The PL is still seeking legal advice on what effect Bosman will have on the more complicated business of transfer fees for out-of-contract players.

The Football League — whose lawyers are still analysing the Bosman ruling — PL, FA and Professional Footballers' Association will meet in London on January 3 to discuss the ruling; later that month a PL delegation led by Parry will visit the Commission for talks.

The PL's unilateral move contradicted advice issued by Uefa and Fifa yesterday which urged member associations not to alter rules until next season. The two governing bodies said "it is in the interests of continuity and fairness that the regulations are not changed during the course of the competition".

Their statement followed the Commission's insistence on Tuesday that the European Court's ruling must be applied immediately. They also strongly disagreed with Uefa that the restriction on EU nationals should stay for European club competitions; clubs can currently field three foreigners plus two assimilated players.

Yesterday a spokesman for the EU executive said that Uefa could be punished for defying Brussels. "That is not to be excluded," he said.

The PL's decision to advise its clubs to switch rules mid-season was criticised by Taylor. "I'm extremely disappointed," he said. "It is a knee-jerk reaction to the ruling rather than something arising from discussions, and that will cause chaos.

"You can't just have one part of the judgment. You have to have the whole thing, and that includes freedom for players to move to another country at the end of their contract. If this is the Premier League stance I have to advise any of our members who are approaching the end of their contracts, and those on week-to-week deals, that they can now exercise their option and move abroad without a transfer fee."

An FA spokesman Steve Double said: "We have always taken the view that the status quo could be maintained until the end of the season."

Parry said the PL had no choice. "We are aware of the statement issued by Fifa and Uefa. However, our legal advice is clear — current rules on EU nationals, even if maintained, cannot be enforced." The limit of three non-EU players per team remains.

But Taylor warned: "There must be a danger now of a big influx of foreign players into this country making it harder for our young talent to come through."

Import figures, page 10

In step . . . Peter Phillips in action for the Scottish Schools during their 18-12 defeat by the French Schools MATTHEW ASHTON

Jury out on royal performance

Erlend Clouston at Murrayfield

THE 18-year-old grandson of the Queen did not shine on his international rugby debut yesterday but it might — as his watching mother and sister know all too well — have been much worse.

Scrutinised by scores of telephoto lenses, Peter Phillips at least defied the royal family's recent run of bad luck by failing to get sent off in his side's defeat. The Gordonstoun flanker now has to wait over the weekend to see if he has survived last night's selection meeting for the schools team to play Wales at Bridgend on January 5. It will be a tricky one, given that his mother is the Scottish Rugby Union's patron.

P M A Phillips, as the programme listed him, started off impressively. He clapped his hands, bawled at the forwards and did some gigantic leaps. And that was before the game had started. He is clearly kingly material.

After that the ninth in line was reduced to a more plebeian role as the match assumed the traditional pattern of encounters between the countries: French flair countered by a tedious kicking game.

The French, once they had adjusted to the freezing temperature, scored three tries and a penalty. The Scots managed four penalties. Monarchists could argue that the Scottish No. 6 was responsible for the first, which briefly gave the home team the lead. He helped catch a Frenchman in possession. The Scots missed that penalty but in clearing their lines the French conceded another, which the captain Gordon Ross duly landed.

Master Phillips's worst moment came just before half-time. Faced by a gigantic onrushing full-back, he tried gamely to grapple with the Frenchman's ribcage. It was a bit like watching an ice cream slide down the Statue of Liberty.

Tom Robertson, president of the Scottish Schools Rugby Union, praised the royal performance. "He gave us everything he had," he said diplomatically.

Farewell to the wizard of two lots of punts

David Lacey

IN THE normal course of events a national team based on one of the world's strongest leagues which had won only twice in open play in three major tournaments, while failing to score in six games out of 12, would hardly be counted a success.

In such circumstances, moreover, it would be assumed that a manager who kept his job for nearly 10 years was a close relative of the president. Even more remarkable would be the presence of a lump in the nation's throat as, having seen the team fail to qualify for a tournament on its doorstep after being held to a draw by Liechtenstein, the manager at last decided to call it a day.

Then again, rarely during Jack Charlton's custodianship of the Republic of Ireland squad was there a period in which events could remotely be described as normal. Before Charlton's appointment normality tended to see the brilliant, as represented by Johnny Giles, Liam Brady or Eamonn Dunphy, being outweighed by the banal.

There are those, and Dunphy is among them, who would argue that the natural Celtic flair of this type of footballer has been actively discouraged by the way Charlton has insisted all along that Ireland play.

Yet it has not all been about the long ball, as Ireland's 1–1 draw with Graham Taylor's England team in a European Championship qualifier at Wembley in 1991 and, more memorably, the 1–0 win against Italy in New York at the start of the 1994 World Cup, demonstrated.

EVEN under Charlton, the Republic became quite capable of getting the ball down and playing it to friendly feet. It was just that Jack foresaw the dangers inherent in trying to get English league players to ape Continental footballing habits, and falling between two styles.

Time and again, through the likes of Steve Staunton and Ray Houghton, Tony Cascarino and Niall Quinn, the Irish have proved that the combination of a high-quality centre and a gifted head will always pose problems for goalkeepers and defenders.

"And they accuse me of direct methods," muttered Taylor as in 1990 he left Dublin, where he had watched England being held to 1–1 by Cascarino's late header from Staunton's free-kick. "I would be crucified if we played like that."

Some have argued that had Taylor known he was going to be nailed to a cross anyway he might have gone back to basics along with Charlton. However, the extent to which Taylor came to rely on Paul Gascoigne argues against this theory, even if Gascoigne was left out for that particular game at Lansdowne Road.

TERRY VENABLES is about as likely to adopt Charlton's approach as he is to wish Alan Sugar a happy and prosperous New Year. Venables's England team will try to win the 1996 European Championship by creating space in attack, closing it in defence and, crucially, by passing properly and not giving the ball away.

Yet the lack of complication in Charlton's approach, his refusal to become obsessed with the opposition and the installation in his Irish teams of an undying will to win, or at least survive, are things which England cannot afford to ignore.

England managers may have a wider choice of players but in terms of the quality available they are not that much better off. None in recent years, moreover, has been blessed with a defender to compare with Paul McGrath, surely the cornerstone of Charlton's success. Had McGrath, born in Ealing, played for England there might have been fewer black comedies.

Charlton's methods were right for a situation in which results were more important than performances. He gave the Republic of Ireland an identity in international football, even if this was partly achieved on the back of British passports. In practical terms he made the national team, along with himself, a marketable commodity. Seldom, if ever, can so many punts have generated so many punts.

It is to be hoped that the Football Association of Ireland supervises Charlton's legacy rather more expertly than it handled his departure. Either way the next man will need luck and sympathy in equal measure.

Above all, he will need time. Great expectations can be a doubtful inheritance.

Murdoch out to snatch Olympics

John Duncan reports on Sky's cloak-and-dagger attempt to prise the jewel from the BBC's sporting crown

RUPERT MURDOCH is negotiating to take the Olympic Games from the BBC with a £200-million bid that could see the event disappear from British terrestrial television in the year 2000.

The head of BSkyB Sam Chisholm is currently in Australia and has already met the organisers of the Sydney Olympics with a view to capturing the European television rights.

News Corporation was not available for comment yesterday, but the negotiations were confirmed by its rivals the European Broadcasting Union, a Europe-wide umbrella group of public television stations which has always previously won the rights to the Games.

"The only thing I know is that it is true," said the EBU spokesman Jean-Pierre Julien. "Murdoch is actually making an offer at the moment, but we are still negotiating for the European rights, too. No deals have been done yet, but we still believe that we will win."

If Murdoch obtained the rights he would be able to sell them on to the highest bidder in each European country; inevitably that would mean his own Sky Sports channel winning in Britain.

That would be a huge coup for Sky, who have snapped up football, boxing, rugby union and rugby league deals in recent months.

Sky could counter any arguments about the question of limiting access to a major international event by pointing out that by the year 2002 cable and dish sales will have made the Sky Sports channel available to everybody who wants to watch it.

"We will not comment on what is just speculation," said a BBC spokesman last night. "But obviously the Olympics are very important to us, the jewel in our sporting crown."

For the 1992 Barcelona Olympics the audience to see Derartu Tulu of Ethiopia take the women's 10,000-metre title was 13.6 million. The BBC also managed to register viewing figures in excess of 10 million on 15 separate occasions on seven different days.

Even if Murdoch dramatically increases the cash offer to the International Olympic Committee, however, his bid may still fail.

"It is normal that there are counter offers," said Julien, "but quite frankly we have excellent relations with the IOC and they have, for the moment, always sold the rights to us because our point is that we can assure maximum exposure.

"If they sell it to a private company it's likely that the exposure may not be so big and the IOC wouldn't have the same guarantee on exposure."

Murdoch's intervention can only fuel the massive Olympic-television-rights inflation that has raged in the past 12 years. In 1984 the EBU paid $19.8 million (£13.2 million) for the rights to the Los Angeles Games. For Atlanta in 1996 they were forced to pay $240 million to secure the same privilege.

NBC recently obtained the exclusive United States broadcast rights to the 2004 and the 2008 Olympic Games as well as the 2006 Winter Olympics for a record $2.3 billion. Moreover, it paid $1.25 billion for rights to the 2000 Games in Sydney and the 2002 Winter Olympics at Salt Lake City in the United States.

The sums comeon top of $925 million in total television revenues paid for next year's Atlanta Olympics.

CBS has also paid $375 million for the US rights to the 1998 Winter Olympics in Nagano, Japan.

Kluivert faces jail on charge of causing death

MARC OVERMARS is out and Patrick Kluivert could be missing too when Holland appear in the European Championship, where they are drawn in the same group as England and Scotland.

Kluivert, the 19-year-old Ajax striker, faces up to a year in jail if he is found guilty of causing death by dangerous driving. And Overmars, the Ajax winger, will miss the rest of the season after tearing a knee ligament playing against De Graafschap on Wednesday.

Kluivert was unhurt when the BMW sports car he was driving ploughed into the side of another vehicle on September 9, killing its driver and seriously injuring a passenger. Laboratory tests on behalf of the Amsterdam public prosecutor estimate he was travelling at around 65mph — double the limit — but his lawyer claims the speed was much less.

Christian patriarchy was afraid of death, decay and stillness so it deliberately planted the celebration of the birth of a boy-child right at solstice, to dispel that fear. Current ceremonies reflect a long history of alienation from the land, the nature, wilderness.
Madeleine Bunting

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One year ago the miners bought Tower Colliery. Now it's in profit. JOHN MULLIN celebrates the pit that wouldn't close. Photographs by JEFF MORGAN

A shaft of light in a dying valley

WARM and bright they glowed in the cold South Wales night, cheery Christmas bulbs on top of the pithead. The workers used to be refused permission to put them up. But that was back then, and the men and women of Tower Colliery no longer need heed bosses' humbug.

In the pubs and workers' clubs of Hirwaun and Aberdare yesterday, the miners of Tower were heaving back the drink. They were celebrating the festive season and the most astonishing year in the long history of the last deep mine in South Wales.

They own the mine now, and equally. They did what they were told was impossible: to post a profit. This year they will announce pre-tax profits of £2.1 million on £15.7 million turnover. There are 246 of them. Each is worker and capitalist, at the only coal pit in the world of its type. Once they were informed their dream could never be achieved. Michael Heseltine, president of the Board of Trade, and British Coal, called the pit "unviable". There were problems with seismic surveys, they were told.

None had a degree in geology, it was true. But they knew their mine. Many had worked at the coal-face for 30 years and more. There was, they knew, no doubt of its potential. The politicians and managers changed tack. There was, the miners were informed, no market for the anthracite they produced. It might be the finest of all coals, but who, they were asked with patronising rhetoric, would want to buy it these days?

And so Tower, the last in a region which once employed 270,000, was to be consigned to the history books. The colliery closed in April 1994. British Coal executives, after months of shifting goalposts, and shenanigans too depressing to detail, signed the pit's death warrant. But the miners thought they could see the hand of Government pulling at the puppet strings. Never mind that the workers had met increasingly fraught output targets. Or that they had earned profits of £28 million in three years.

It was a decision which had Tyrone O'Sullivan, 50, in tears. He had been NUM lodge secretary for 22 years, and he was driving back after the last meeting with British Coal. He was required to sign those forms, but refused. An NUM official for South Wales filled in for him. "It broke my heart that night. Twenty-eight years I had been at this pit."

There were five members of the Tower Lodge at the meeting in Newport. They were summoned there immediately after the workers voted to close the pit following threats from British Coal to cut redundancy terms. They decided on a consolation drink as they returned home. They nipped into the Full Moon in Aberman.

"We had a few drinks, and then we phoned our families and got them down." It was then that the Tower miners hatched the plan which would provide a new beginning. And so they set to work, bringing an estimated £10 million to the devastated Cynon Valley. Male unemployment is around one in three. Wage rates are horrendously depressed: the job centre in Aberdare advertised recently for a security guard at an hourly rate of £1.50. And any applicant had to supply his own dog.

To succeed in its task the NUM lodge would have to count on the strong spirit of the Tower workforce: Tower had long had a reputation as staunchly socialist — indeed many around here believe that is why the authorities are so keen to close it down. It was a citadel for workers' solidarity. Its miners took part in the Merthyr riots of 1831, the first to fly the red flag. No one is quite sure if it was a cow, sheep or goat that was sacrificed to dye a white sheet.

The miners remember with awe how William Richards, then the leading union official at the pit, went to fight in the Spanish Civil War. He died in 1936. Death was never far away: asking around the Penywaun social club and every fourth bingo player had lost a father, an uncle or a grandfather. One dreadful day in October 1962 nine men were killed in an explosion.

O'Sullivan has seen 14 men die within arm's length. His father was killed in June 1963 in a roof collapse. His great grandfather and two great uncles died on the same day in 1886. Phil White, 42, who had four uncles at the pit, remembered one miner being brought out dead on his first day. He was only 15 — it never seemed much of a deal. He was more astonished when he first went into the baths, and saw strange, small stools. "I thought they were there for lazy buggers until I was told those who had lost an arm or a leg used them." Such common experience has its lighter side. There are the nicknames. One bloke who lost half of his ear is known as Eighteen Months. "It's an ear and a half," said White. David Thomas, 46, is known as Magic. He has a reputation for disappearing when down the pit.

The deaths, the banter, and the political history all shaped Tower. Its own nickname is Little Moscow. O'Sullivan, drawing from US journalist John Reed's account of that turning point in history, called his diary of the demise of Tower in its previous incarnation: Fourteen Days That Shook The World. He knew his plan for a workers' buy-out could only succeed if they stuck together. He never doubted they would.

The first step was to ask each of those interested to stump up £2,000 from their redundancy payments, which averaged about £18,000. A bank account was set up four days later, with £364,000. Glyn Roberts, a fourth-generation miner, recalls having £30,000 under his bed.

The team of five NUM Lodge officials took advice from Fairwater Consultants, set up by the Welsh TUC to aid worker participation in buy-outs; then they did something deft: they asked Price Waterhouse, the accountants who had sequestrated NUM funds during the strike, to act for them. O'Sullivan admits it was a mischievous stroke. But it was also done because the miners knew the outfit had strong ties to Government.

They drew up a business plan, and appointed a management team. They concentrated on respected figures. The coup was to secure Philip Weeks, former director of the National Coal Board in South Wales, as chairman. (He had resigned in protest at Ian McGregor's closure programme after the miners' strike a decade ago.) Weeks was delighted to help out. Next came what Heseltine suggested would be tricky: to secure buyers for the coal. They estimated they would produce 395,000 tons a year.

Provisional contracts for up to five years were drawn up, and after production began, another was signed with British Steel, the first time that organization has brought any British coal in 10 years.

But there was, again contrary to Heseltine's predictions, no shortage of private companies prepared to give Tower a go. At one point a dozen firms were preparing bids. Tower Employee Buy-Out (Tebo) strengthened its hand by going back to its shareholders, the workforce. They were each asked for a further £6,000, and virtually everybody paid up.

O'Sullivan, who worked 16-hour days to put the deal together, was at an NUM meeting in Barnsley when news came through that Tebo had been confirmed as preferred bidder. "I had to get back. I knew I wouldn't make it to the pub, but I just wanted home. I drove all the way in the inside lane. I was saying to myself: 'Now Ty, don't die tonight.' I walked into the house in darkness. But everyone was waiting up for me after the pub. It was a lovely moment."

The sale was completed on December 23 last year. O'Sullivan sat signing documents for three hours. The last was to confirm the change in ownership of 200 pairs of Wellingtons. And then he handed over a cheque for £1 million.

Tebo formally took control at one minute past midnight on Christmas Eve. The team went up to the pit, whisky bottles in hand. It was a cold and frosty night, but clear. They had a party in the yard, and toasted the future.

None had any doubt that they could make it work, but they have exceeded expectations. Miners say morale has never been higher. Pit deputy Brian Lundregan, 38, said there is much less wastage: "Everyone knows that if something is saved it's more for us, our families and the community. There is none of the reluctance there used to be when the boys were asked to do something.

"It really is a fantastic pit. I was away from it for 20 months, and it was the worst time of my life. I love the camaraderie."

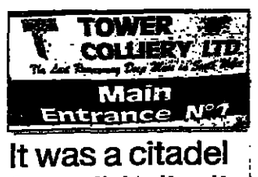
The miners are paid up to £403 a week, depending on the job. The basic is higher than in the old days, though there is less scope for overtime. Each worker this year received a £500 payment out of profits.

The management system is different, too. Workers are consulted about all decisions. Ann Clywd, MP for Cynon Valley, who stayed down the pit for 27 hours in April last year without food or water in an attempt to pursuade British Coal to keep it open, said the miners' victory had electrified one of the United Kingdom's most deprived areas. "This is the first time we have had what we regard as a victory over the Government in all these years. It has given us both hope and belief."

It has given a similar boost to people throughout the country, says O'Sullivan, who this month presented President Clinton with a Tower Colliery tie when he met him at an international union meeting in New York. His office is festooned with cards. One, from Felicity Smith, of Stroud, Gloucestershire, reads: "It just goes to show what courage and determination can achieve."

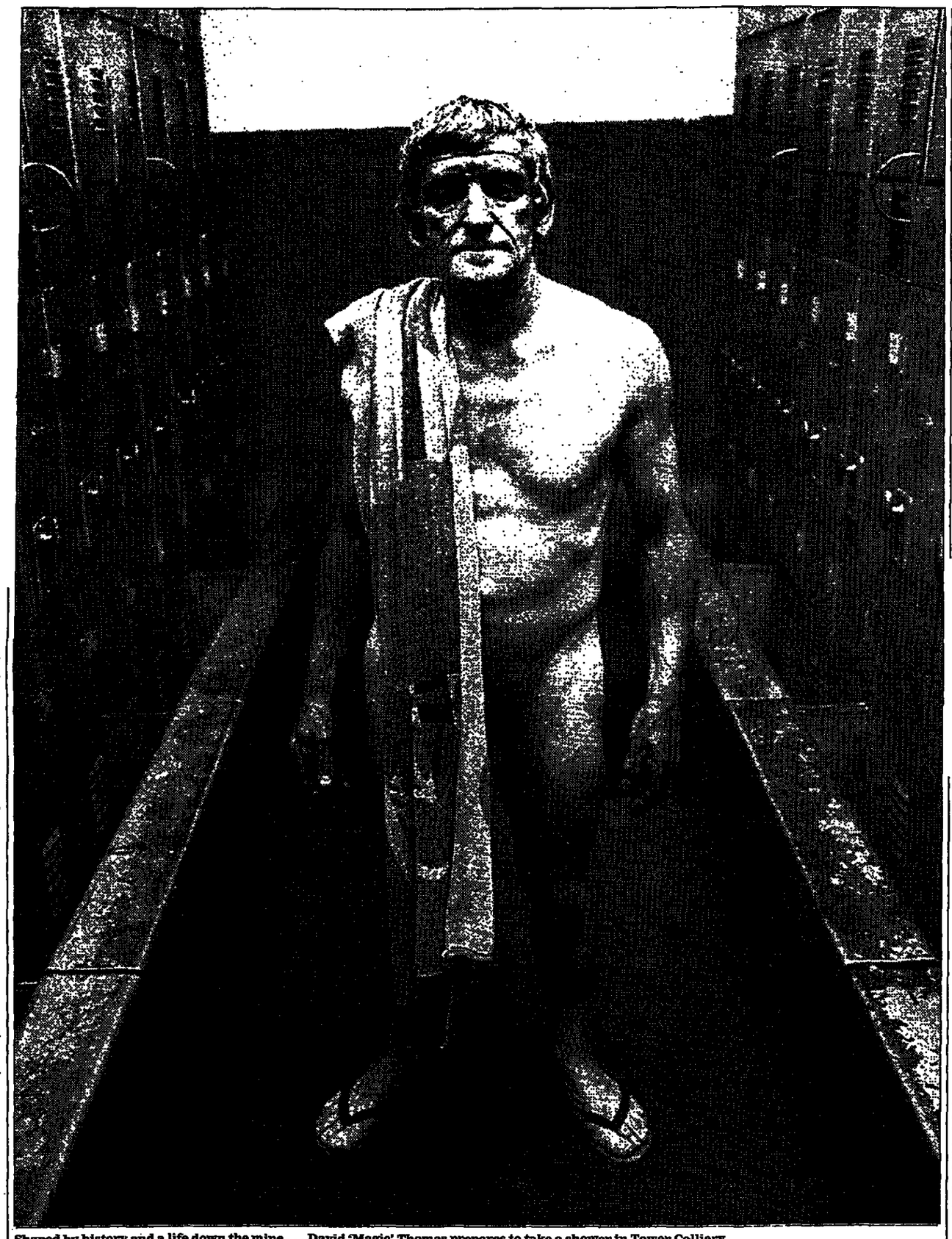
There is also a copy of the 10 socialist commandments on his wall. Number Eight reads: "Observe and think in order to discover the truth. Do not believe what is contrary to reason, and never deceive yourself or others." It can be regarded as the miners' guiding principle — but there is an irony. O'Sullivan, now personnel director, said: "What I hate about this is that we have given privatisation of coal a friendly face and good name. Never mind that 100,000 miners have lost their jobs. That really narks me."

The miners say that Tower has a longterm future. A new seam opens in April and plans are in place for another. The team wants to maximize jobs, not profits. They say they have never been opposed to profits. "It's just what you do with them," Roberts said.

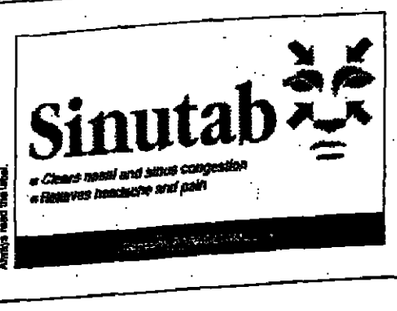


It was a citadel for solidarity. Its miners took part in the Merthyr riots of 1831

He knew his plan for a workers' buy-out could only succeed if they stuck together. He never doubted they would



Shaped by history and a life down the mine . . . David 'Magic' Thomas prepares to take a shower in Tower Colliery



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Christmas on the counter

BABY JESUS has had the same billing as Santa and Rudolf the red-nosed reindeer in the run-up to Christmas in a London inner city school, it was reported in our pages last week. It's the stuff to strike fear into the heart of an increasingly pessimistic Pope John Paul II who despairs at the rampant de-christianising of Europe, and to launch the Archbishop of Canterbury into evangelical fervour.

Church leaders talk hopefully of having stemmed the exodus but even they are painfully aware that their efforts to draw the millions of baptised Christians back into the fold have had at best patchy success. Christmas is their shop-window, an opportunity to display spiritual wares, and the one occasion when one often can't find an empty seat in church. But the disturbing probability is that a high proportion of those in the pews view church on Christmas Day as a tradition about as comforting, perverse and ultimately meaningless, as eating turkey whether or not the consumer actually enjoys it.

Except for a small minority, Christmas is no longer primarily a religious festival. For most of us the spiritual — carols, Nativity plays, church services — is an optional extra. First and foremost, Christmas is now a celebration of family and of consumerism.

Some would say nothing wrong with that: both fit neatly into a continuous tradition of midwinter celebrations from the pagan times through Christianity to today. Many of our rituals would be instantly recognisable to our ancestors in a previous millennium; we still celebrate light with candles, fires and Christmas tree lights and we celebrate plenty with feasts and presents at the lowest ebb of nature's own productivity.

There is no shortage of Christmas critics to complain about what Christmas has become, but one has to be wary: the festival licences a tide of collective and individual nostalgia. Except for children under 10, we all feel that Christmas isn't what it used to be. However, there is one important respect in which it matters that we leave out the religious content of Christmas. To participate in Christmas you need at least one of three things: a functioning family, money or faith. Increasingly, it has boiled down to family and money and there's a growing group without either and who have nothing left to celebrate.

At least religious rituals — when faith was not a choice but a tradition — were accessible to everyone, but the Christmas we have created is cruelly exclusive. In the decades we have manufactured Christmas into an idealised dream-time of happy family life sandwiched between spending sprees, we have witnessed an unprecedented disintegration of families and the entrenchment of structural poverty.

The more powerfully we project our aspirations of what Christmas should be, the wider the gap with reality has yawned. We are acutely conscious of whom a family/consumerist Christmas excludes: the poor, the single and the childless. Hence the outpouring of concern for the homeless at this time of year and the horror with which we learn of the steep rise in victims of domestic violence, suicides and calls to the Samaritans over the holiday. There is a symbolism about the Princess of Wales's decision not to attend the royal family Christmas at Sandringham. The royal family used to be the prime symbol of our family fest but what will she and the millions of other estranged partners celebrate?

The exclusion of a significant minority is all the more disturbing because the defining characteristic of all previous midwinter celebrations has been to bring people together. It is now the only great collective festival left of a calendar once rich in them. There's no getting away from Christmas. Even Muslims, likely to be one of Britain's major religions by early in the next century, are now devising their own form of Christmas with halal turkey, vegetarian Christmas pudding and keeping their strength and financial resources fresh for the sales. But the trappings of inclusiveness — the television and radio laden with seasonal goodies, saturation advertising and decorations — all too often only serve to sharpen the misery of those left out.

A fossil speaks

CHRISTMAS IS the season for finding good news or, if there is none around, for embroidering more ambiguous reality. There is some of the real stuff around but it often takes digging to find. One of the most cheerful stories has broken surface, literally, from the Gobi Desert where a fossil discovery has rehabilitated the reputation of the Oviraptor dinosaur. Till now it was believed to eat eggs as its Latin-based name suggests. Now it has been revealed, according to an international team of palaeontologists, "hunkering down" on its nest to breed little Oviraptors. Inside the nest — a nice touch this — the eggs are arranged in a neat, circular pattern. This behaviour trait not only redeems the Oviraptor but supports the comforting thesis that parental brooding has an immensely long history, with these ancient reptiles and modern birds both inheriting the same characteristics from a remote common ancestor.

The news has come too late to influence the Christmas card market where decisions are made anyway when the days are longest. But next year we may quite possibly find that dinosaurs are no longer confined to the far side, posing instead a serious challenge to robins (whose bad temper we overlook), to flopsy-eared bunnies and (also bad-tempered) squirrels, and even — a thought almost too treacherous to contemplate — to the ultimate lovable image of... The Cat. There will be dinosaurs wearing scarves and hats with pompoms and skating on ice, dinosaurs curled up in front of blazing fires, dinosaurs pulling down holly branches and making a face at the prickles, and perhaps even a dinosaur in the manger. Those who are forced to go to children's holiday films will recall that Steven Spielberg has already followed up Jurassic Park with his whimsical We're Back! A Dinosaur's Story, in which a triceratops eats hot dogs and Felicity Kendal does the pterodactyl's voice. But for most people dinosaurs are still definitely to be avoided whether re-encountered in this or in some other lost world.

This latest story from the Gobi Desert plays on the general revival of interest recently in palaeontological affairs. In the last century this remote historical vein was mined by rationalists seeking to understand our origins. Now it is more likely to be explored for allegories on our present condition. The news about Oviraptor bears out the general proposition that prehistoric beasts were not quite so beastly after all. We on the other hand... It is rather harder to locate good cheer under present conditions in the human world today. Perhaps life today might be a bit less beastly in so many places if more people were helped to hatch their eggs in peace and no one sold tanks or mines or AK-47s to their enemies. Or if everyone had a better chance of rearing their brood with adequate clothing and food. But that probably sounds too much like idealistic nonsense from an old dinosaur.

Keeping our faith in belief

Religion is still a major force despite its mainstream decline. But its power now lies at the fringes, argues MARTIN WOOLLACOTT. Illustration by PETER TILL

ANYBODY who had prophesied, 30 years ago, that the 20th century would end with a resurgence of religion, with great new cathedrals, mosques, and temples rising up, with the symbols and songs of faith everywhere apparent, would, in most circles, have been derided.

Yet, in those intervening years, religion has played a central role in the downfall of the Communist bloc, the liberation of South Africa, the transformation of the Islamic world, the reworking of American politics, the wars of Yugoslavia and the troubles of South Asia, and, most recently, in the dilemmas of a divided Israel. Only in East Asia is religion less prominent, and, even there, the energetic Christian sects of Korea, the incipient Mao cults of China, and the Aum movement in Japan suggest the difference is only a matter of degree. It is worth saying that we are not discussing the Thirty Years War here but the history of our own times.

The question of what is the nature of this largely unexpected religious efflorescence is a very troubling one. Is it one thing, or two things, or 10 things? Is it, or part of it, religion, or is it something else, which still calls itself religion? This is a puzzle and a problem, and one to which all bring their prejudices. Broadly, those who do not believe assign every cause but the divine to religious movements and effects, while those who have faith are reluctant to condemn any movement which makes religious claims or will do so only in religious terms. An absolute distinction between religious and secular activity must militate against understanding.

Douglas Johnson, the American co-author of a recent book on religion and statecraft, has argued that religion is so "invisible" to men and women raised in a rationalist and agnostic Enlightenment tradition that its huge presence is often ignored or can only be interpreted as a "cover" for other motives. His special argument is that the religious can sometimes intervene in wars and other conflicts in a way that conventional diplomacy cannot. He cites as examples the part the Catholic San Egidio group played in setting up a dialogue between some of the parties in the Algerian civil war, the activities of the Quakers in Nigeria, and of the Lutherans in East Germany toward the end.

What Johnson's book does not much touch on is that such admirable interventions and roles are relatively rare. Most of them represent the work of churches — the cases are nearly all Christian — which belong in a particular rational tradition. What is certainly true is that those religious organisations which try to unite religion with modern thought and politics are at an increasing disadvantage.

Around the world religion can be divided into three broad tendencies, established, fundamentalist, and emotional, using these words very loosely. The established have by definition an empathetic relation with political power even when they oppose it, and a readiness to try to achieve some synthesis with secular thought. The fundamentalists, whose reading of religious tradition is both more arbitrary and unconcerned with any need to reconcile belief with secular views, confront state authority and even aim to capture it. The emotional or charismatic offer spiritual excitement unattached to any strong doctrinal or political tradition.

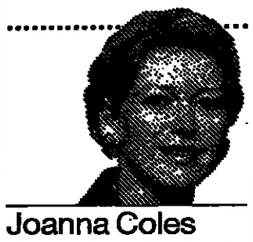
It can be argued that in the past these different tendencies were usually bundled up within strong frameworks that held them together and policed the most extreme tendencies. When breaks came, the breakaways were either recaptured or, if they stayed independent, came in time to reflect again the diversity from which they had wished to escape. The complex history of Virgin Mary apparitions in 19th century Europe is one illustration, as the Catholic church monitored and managed a movement of popular religiosity which it had not initiated but which it partly suppressed, partly guided, and partly accommodated. Today Lourdes has more pilgrims than ever before but, in general, such divisions are less easily contained, as the erosion of Catholicism in Latin America, for instance, where it is giving way to Protestant new religions, seems to indicate.

Established churches are, by general agreement, under pressure. The Catholic church in Poland, the Protestant churches in South Africa, have found that their time of greatest influence is past, as the recent Polish elections showed. In Ireland, in Austria, in Germany the Catholic church is in a disarray scarcely conceivable 30 years ago. Protestant churches in Europe are prone to make weak concessions to charismatic groups inside or outside, with Lutherans in Germany lauding the work of the Jesus Freaks of Hamburg, and Anglicans letting a Chris Brain run a cult within the church. In the United States, the old Protestant churches and the Catholic church are forced to make joint statements distancing themselves from the religious right, whose members are mainly from the new sects of the 19th century. In other religions, a similar trifurcation can be seen. Certainly Islamism swept past a whole generation of senior clerics, wise and learned men, in Iran and other countries, who regard the new forms as a distortion of true religion. In Judaism, as in Islam, and perhaps in American Protestantism, the tradition has never been hierarchic, but the disorder seems worse today than ever.

"Can the Bible serve as a political platform in 1995?" asks the Likud politician Benny Begin. "I say, yes. If the Bible can't serve as a political platform how can I defend Tel Aviv?" A sentence like this raises complexities that Begin apparently cannot see. The long attempt to maintain a working relationship between the religious and the secular is faltering on both sides. Since it is connected, in turn, with religion's capacity to police itself, and with its capacity to influence secular behaviour for the good, we are entering into dangerous times.

One antidote might be a return to the tradition represented by writers like Mark Twain. We could call it quizzical, or say that its central assumption is that God has both a sense of humour and a sense of proportion. Twain's suggestion that Man's "working himself up out of the oyster bed to his present position was probably a matter of surprise and regret to the Creator" is worthy of consideration. And what could more brilliantly puncture intolerance than his observation that "we have reason to believe that there will be labouring people in Heaven; and also a number of negroes, and Esquimaux, and Terra del Fuegans, and a few Indians, and possibly even some Spaniards and Portuguese. All things are possible, with God."

Two women, one throne



Joanna Coles

DIANA was wrong. There weren't three of them in the marriage at all. There were four. Camilla Parker Bowles might have been his mistress, but she didn't wield any power. The real Other Woman in Charles Philip Arthur George Windsor's life was his mother.

As is so often the case with a marriage, it was clear the two women involved had nothing in common whatsoever. This was never going to be one of those mother-in-law and daughter duos who hoped to be mistaken for sisters as they gossiped over goat's-milk cappuccinos in Harvey Nicks. Liz was never going to swap tips on personal trainers or persuade Diana to slip into a pale pink Norman Hartnell. And Diana was never going to persuade Lilibet of the benefits of hip versus thigh abductor or listening to Wham! full blast on a Walkman.

Indeed, there was nothing the two could do together at all. Diana hates horses, the Queen likes nothing better than to batten down her headscarf and trot across the drab marshes of Sandringham. Diana hates traipsing waist-high through heather on a shoot, the Queen likes nothing more than the sound of dead pheasant hitting a frozen lake and skittering across the ice.

Even the arrival of grandchildren did nothing to breach the gap and glue these two awkward women together. One can hardly imagine the Queen accompanying her daughter-in-law down the log-flume at Alton Towers or waving the chequered flag as Harry careered round the motorised go-kart tracks in West Ken.

Cosy though the palace drawing room must surely be, one cannot imagine the Queen patting the sofa, beckoning Wills and then encouraging him to spill the beans on the Mistletoe Ball. Indeed, the only subject upon which the two women appear to have agreed is their evident doubt about Charles's suitability to swing his legs from the throne.

For Diana there was no escape. Wherever she went the Queen or, at the very least someone on her majesty's service, would surely follow. Even her love letters from James "I adored him" Hewitt had a profile of her mother-in-law's head stuck fast on the top right-hand corner of the envelope. She couldn't go on a spending spree without the Queen's head staring reproachfully from every coin and note. Goddamit, she even lived in one of Her houses, with Her relations and Her servants.

But most of all, Diana desperately wanted Her job — the Top Job as she so coyly referred to it. She wanted to wake up in Her bed and make up at Her dressing table with its view down the Mall.

It was not to be. In the end it has all boiled down to a row among the women. Having successfully blindsided the palace with her Panorama stunt, the princess congratulated herself on getting the upper hand.

But she has been well and truly outmanoeuvred. The Queen, incandescent with her daughter-in-law both for giving the interview and for the churlish way Diana chose to announce it on the morning of Charles's 47th birthday, has pulled both rank and rug from under her.

The striking thing is the way in which Charles, just like his father before him, has been utterly sidelined. Diana said she didn't want a divorce but would abide by his decision — knowing no doubt he was totally incapable of making one. Monitoring the situation with alarm, his mother finally intervened and made it for him. How many more wives must suspect their mother-in-laws of doing the same thing?

And how Diana must hate her now. No wonder she wanted to skip Sanders and head for the homeless on Christmas Day. And how much more conducive to a quiet Windsor lunch the prospect of Camilla Parker Bowles must be, with her mud-streaked jodhpurs and her buttoned-up blouse and lips.

To the Queen's enduring relief, Camilla has never wanted the constant attention that Diana craves, she has never tugged the public's sleeve and demanded applause for good deeds.

The lawyers will begin negotiations in January. Diana is said to be demanding half a million per annum. As the two women now argue over the details, we will watch agog. The competition for the son is over. The competition for the country has only just begun.

Smallweed

SUCH excitement has been created by the BBC2 series on Labour's travails in the eighties, The Wilderness Years, that I understand a sequel is planned, in which the same troupe of protagonists will be pictured slagging each other off for their contributions to the original series. The provisional title reflects the marked similarities between Labour politicians and great lumbering beasts of the jungle — prone to lock their horns in near-terminal combat, yet also with a tendency when in flight to "toss their heads, prance, and throw up their heels in a wild, erratic manner" (Encyclopaedia Britannica). It's "The Wildebeest Years".

For those who have somehow missed out on the Wilderness series, one of its joys is the contrast between the sage and reverend statesmen of today's Labour front bench and the youthful, long-haired specimens out of whom they evolved. Take for instance that soul of moderate modernisation, Jack Straw. For Straw today, you might think, the very idea of Bennery is something that ought to be squeegeed into oblivion. But what have we here? A wellwisher has sent me this week an analysis of the voting in the contest for the Labour deputy leadership in 1981, which Benn lost by a whisker to Denis Healey. This shows someone called J Straw (Blackburn) voting in round one for the compromise candidate, Sam Silkin, before switching in the second to A N W Benn. J Prescott (Hull E), by the way, voted Benn in both rounds.

THE CONCEPT of "mission creep", discussed here last week, is older than I realised. A reader in Muswell Hill has drawn my attention to the opening phase of Book Eight of the Iliad, where Zeus forbids subordinate gods to intervene on either side in the war between the Greeks and the Trojans. Athena, who's anti-Trojan, plaintively asks: may we at least *advise* the side that we favour? This, my correspondent suggests, uncannily foreshadows the role of US *advisers* in Vietnam. Like them, Athena and Hera, who was equally anti-Troy, were soon using their role as advisers to pitch in on the side they favoured. Hera, indeed, went so far as to take Zeus to bed with her to keep his eye off this activity. Just who and what *that* foreshadowed, I'm not absolutely sure.

ON ELECTION night, it emerged this week, we'll be offered a choice between BBC coverage conducted by Dimbleby (D) and ITV coverage hosted by Dimbleby (J). This marks a phenomenon which Smallweed has watched with growing fascination: the convergence of David and Jonathan. In their mellow middle age they've begun more and more to resemble each other, with Jonathan's hair modulating to Davidish grey and his face filling out to David proportions. By the time John Major goes to the country, they may well be close to identical, and we'll only distinguish David because he'll be the one who unleashes Peter Snow.

● *A constitutional expert (they're everywhere nowadays, aren't they) adds:* There are precedents for this kind of fraternal confusion. Why, Her Majesty the Queen, it is said, once requested that David Attenborough should direct her for television, which, though rather more used to directing wildebeests, he gladly agreed to do. Only later did he learn that she'd recently seen a screening of Gandhi, and had mixed him up with Sir Dickie.

AN UNUSUAL entry appeared in the Guardian's In Memoriam column this week. It commemorated not a death but the wedding in Stockport 100 years ago of Thomas Frederick Tout and Mary Johnstone. Tout was one of the great medieval historians, who helped found the reputation of the "Manchester School", and a university administrator who helped to win Manchester's independence from its previous federal relationship with Liverpool and Leeds. He seems to have been loved by all whom he taught. He married at 40, retired in 1925 at the age of 70, and died, still at work, in 1929. It isn't just because newspapers need the revenue that Smallweed was so delighted to see that some descendant (or distant admirer) should have chosen this way to remember them both.

ENMITY, as the Marquis of Vauvenargues wisely observes, can be no less fickle than friendship. Does not one therefore, in the warmth and forgiveness of Christmastide, sense the teensiest twinge of compassion for David Shaw (Con, Dover), so recently named by Smallweed as Britain's Least Enticing MP? Does one not feel for a man who after all is a fellow human being, even if he's also a tedious backbench loudmouth, as he digests the humiliation of the verdict pronounced upon him this week by the official inquiry into allegations of corruption in Monklands District Council? Does one not experience some minimal pang of sympathy for a chap who must try to hold up his head among the voters of Dover when everyone knows that the Government inquisitor said his allegations were founded on no real evidence — adding that "as his evidence went on, I became increasingly unimpressed by it. I regard his attitude as irresponsible"? Does not one instinctively hear, in the echoing recesses of memory, the voice of Tiny Tim, asking God at this festive season to "Bless Us, Every One"?

No, one damn well does not.

NICKNAMED Biggles, his home in Newton Close, Carlisle, is filled with souvenirs of his RAF career — Daily Mail report on the case of a 75-year-old former fighter pilot who admitted driving while disqualified and obtaining an insurance policy by deception.

Which just goes to prove what Smallweed's old granny used so often to warn him: never trust a man who nicknames his residence "Biggles".

هكذا من الاصل

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Steer clear of Happy Families

Sara Maitland

IT IS Christmas time. The entire nation is settling in to play Happy Families for a scarily long weekend. There are no trains on Boxing Day. Do you remember this game? "Have you got Mr Bun, the Baker, please?" "Sorry, Mr Bun is not at home." It is hardly thrilling — nothing like as much fun as Monopoly, in which you can get very rich on an absolutely independent basis and destroy all the other players, using a potent mixture of guile, duplicity and luck — a much more educative game for the nineties.

However despite its obvious tedium, and the fact that Mr Bun is not-at-home, and never was, for large numbers of children, Happy Families is *de rigueur* at Christmas. So it's lucky really that this December has seen so many fine examples of domestic happiness on which we can all model ourselves.

We'll leave the Wests out of it — we'll agree that Rosemary West is "evil", and therefore the structures and games of her family life have nothing to do with us. But we can hardly leave the Waleses out of it — the "fairytale princess" and the "frog prince" whose chief delight now seems to be competing for the most lurid possible presentation of their marital unhappinesses and boasting of their own virtues and infidelities. If pushed, we can of course argue that the structures and games of royal family life have remarkably little to do with us either: that royalty is different and plays by special rules. But we don't act as though that is what we believe.

And we must most certainly leave the homeless, the lonely, the old, the woman in Holloway Prison, the terrified asylum seeker, and any one who refuses to participate, out of this because they aren't real families, and are therefore not qualified, not allowed, to play.

So let's just take the Ashbys. "*What fresh hell is this?*" as Dorothy Parker would put it. A middle-aged, apparently dull but competent Conservative MP, much respected in his constituency, an upholder of family values, decided to sue a national newspaper, lie through his teeth in the witness box (or so the jury decided), subject his daughter to one of the most obviously painful acts of betrayal it is possible to imagine, expose himself and his wife to public humiliation, and risk a legal bill that we are told he is going to be hard-pushed to pay.

And why? Because all this was better than admitting his marriage was a disaster zone and he had homosexual desires. We are not talking here about evading the consequences of some criminal act or covering up some revolting activity. It did not seem as though we were talking about protecting the "innocent": Mrs Ashby hardly came across as the saintly and long-suffering heroine who deserved a special, even if dishonest, tenderness and compassion.

We are talking about people who had become so enmeshed in the myth of The Family that they could not bear the simple and banal fact that it was not working for them. If either of the Ashbys' descriptions of their domestic life had any truth at all they should never have *been* married to each other and should have got out far earlier. They were trapped by a convention which says that those who represent us in Parliament must also represent a limited and out-moded social arrangement — because that is what is "good" and everyone else is pretending, or cheating, or a moral failure.

We desperately ignore the fact that this arrangement is no longer delivering the promised goods — children are not protected by The Family; women's safety and equality are not guaranteed; sexuality is not "contained"; the old and the vulnerable are not succoured. All this does have something to do with us. This is no "fresh hell"; it is an old and bitter one. We are plunging into a four-day orgy of supposed family joy. Many of those outside the magic circle of family will feel more isolated, alienated and disinherited than they need to. Many of those inside will endure a long weekend of stress, tension, misery or worse.

MANY others will enjoy a feeling of moral rectitude and virtue which means little more than the right to self-indulgence. We will all participate in a collective dishonesty, which we all euphemise out of existence. ("Staying together for the sake of the children" for example, all too often means "teaching the children emotional dishonesty for the sake of my self-esteem and respectability".)

The funny thing about this is that I love Christmas. My student daughter arrived last night from college and is downstairs right now, cleaning my kitchen — voluntarily; my teenage son is, without being ordered to, bringing in logs. This is truly Christmas good will. And even if they were both in fact slobbed out in bed, as is more normal, I love having them here, I love them. I love the preparations for the party I am enormously looking forward to Monday.

I am also a Christian. So I believe there is something to celebrate — and I even think the best way to celebrate it is with an ecstacy of materialism. Christmas is about the enthusiasm with which God, pure spirit, embraced the material world, took on matter; so no degree of gluttony and expenditure can begin to measure up to God's vulgar Christmas materialism.

Children, presents, food, drink, ritual, friendship, love are certainly a big part of this, and should be. What Christmas is not about is the celebration of an ailing myth of the glory of the isolated 20th-century nuclear family; the shutting of the front door so that the misery on both sides of it can be kept hidden.

So, here are some hints for a happy Christmas: make sure there are lots of people around; this does not mean inviting an overseas student for lunch (though this is a good thing to do), it means *friends*. If you haven't got any, any people who are not members of the family who would like to spend Christmas with you or you with them, "then you are very sad".

Make sure the cast changes frequently: when you are bored of shepherds, you need kings.

Make any available children do the washing up. Do not pretend they ought to enjoy it.

Read the Gospels: there is *nothing* there in support of families.

Drink a toast to any political party you can think of that does not make its running on family values.

Calculate the cost per head of Christmas and send that sum of money to any charity you can think of which is actively combating the myth of family life (Stonewall, or your nearest convent, for instance).

Do not play Happy Families (or Monopoly for that matter — it always ends in tears).

Have yourself a merry little solstice

Doing it their way . . . celebrating new year in Allendale, Northumberland (above); the Straw Bear parade at Whittlesey (left); and witch Aileen Grist, left, in Oldham PHOTOGRAPH: CHRIS THOMOND

Forget Christmas — the pagans, the druids and the shamans are claiming back the bleak midwinter for themselves. MADELEINE BUNTING searches out traditional celebrations and the new rituals of DIY religions

BORED with the Nativity? Fed up with Away In A Manger in a cold church? Every year fewer people bother to get out of bed on Christmas Day for church and more of those who do question the significance of the traditional set of religious symbols.

The disillusionment with Christianity has given rise to a proliferation of alternative rituals to mark midwinter. Alongside the revival of Druidry and Wicca have flourished permutations of paganism, Eastern mysticism and North American Indian rituals. Their proponents claim that this is liberating midwinter from 2,000 years of Christian tyranny. Little is off-limits in this religious supermarket where the rites, symbols and myths are a jumble of revivals and inventions. It's DIY; forget tradition, just find a few friends and make it up as you go along.

Aileen Grist has done just that. She and her husband, Tony, a former Church of England vicar, are both high priest witches who have converted a bedroom in their Oldham home into a temple. On the solstice they gathered for a "sabat" with about half a dozen fellow witches. Statues of classical gods such as Hermes, Pan, Aphrodite and a South American deity adorn the temple. There is no light apart from candles at each point of the compass. On the altar is a small wooden bread board with symbols of a kiss, a witch and the phases of the moon burnt into it.

"We have a couple of minutes quiet to get people to switch over from the everyday thoughts to getting ready for the ritual. Usually we are naked or 'sky clad'; nudity is kept for your most sacred moments in this culture so it's the most sacred thing you can take into the temple. But we wore clothes at the winter solstice because some other pagans came.

"We sweep the space with a broomstick and then cast a magic circle, carrying round salt and water to signify earth and water. We light incense to symbolise air and a candle for fire. Most of the ritual is spent calling upon a relevant god or goddess, saying nice things and asking for their help and guidance. Some people ask for healing spells, some for job spells. Then we discuss the time of year and ask the sun to come back to us."

The hour-long ceremony on Thursday evening ended with eating cakes — usually jam doughnuts — and some wine. "It's do-it-yourself religion. Other witch circles might emphasise the spells more but there are no rules about what's right or wrong." The Grists plan to have an "esbat" — a smaller version of a sabat — in the new year because they have spells they want to "recharge", particularly one on homelessness. "We've got a spell on the local Salvation Army hostel; we want to raise awareness, especially after Christmas when people switch off and homelessness gets forgotten again."

A chillier alternative was the short ceremony at the heel stone just outside English Heritage's perimeter fence at Stonehenge at 2.30 yesterday morning. Archdruid Rollo Maughfling gathered with about 50 people, dressed in their long white druid robes, for the mistletoe ceremony held at exactly the moment the sun enters Capricorn at 2.30. They are banned from the stone circle.

"The mistletoe is brought into the circle and there is a lot of chanting and prayers and blessings over it. It represents the sperm of the Sun God which fertilises Mother Earth just as the sun rises on the solstice." Unfortunately, the ceremony ends with a mundane handover of the blessed mistletoe to an official from English Heritage who is allowed into the exclusion zone to place it on the altar of Stonehenge.

It's all over in half an hour and the druids get back in their cars and head home. David Loxley, Chief Druid of the Druid Order, prefers to celebrate in private; he believes privacy reinforces the nature of the midwinter ceremony as quiet personal reflection. He used to celebrate it much more formally in public with the druids standing in a circle surrounded by bonfires but the spectacle attracted too many people. Loxley felt it had become theatre and had drifted away from the all-important emphasis on the stillness of the midwinter point in the natural cycle.

Yesterday morning, about 60 druids gathered in a private London home: "We start with one hour's meditation. Midwinter is the time of least growth in the natural world so we try to reflect that. It is the opposite of the public, noisy ceremony of midsummer. "Midwinter is about creating space for something new to happen so we build a bonfire in the garden to burn 'grudges'. The meditation is spent reflecting on resentments, on things which have not been completed, things which have not been communicated in the last year."

They write it all down on paper and put it in the fire: "You don't want the sun to rise crippled by all the negative things of the previous year. For the three days after the solstice, the sun stands still; it is between dying and rebirthing. We spend the limbo time celebrating that the sun is going to come back.

What you've got to remember is that once people weren't sure that it would." Christmas was invented in the fourth century as a way of Christianising the pagan rituals around the sun's solstice. Traditions seen as Victorian inventions actually drew on much older rituals, claims Leonora James of the Pagan Federation. Bringing evergreens — fir trees, holly, mistletoe, ivy — into the house is a Mediterranean custom, emphasising one visible sign of natural life in the winter. Candles, fires and sparkling decorations are an obvious link to the celebrations of light and the rebirth of the sun. Even the consumer binge is a modern equivalent of the pagan celebration of plenty, a reminder of nature's productivity in other seasons.

Folk festivals have received a new injection of life for their curiosity/tourist value. At the Whittlesey Straw Bear Festival in Cambridgeshire, a man on stilts in a suit of straw leads a procession around the village and its pubs. The event ends with the Straw Bear being burnt; the bear, as a symbol of strength, represents the old year which is destroyed to make way for the new, James explains.

In Allendale in Northumberland, the new year is welcomed with a parade of villagers carrying burning tar barrels on their heads.

But revival of old rituals does not interest Peter Taylor any more than the current Christian ceremonies do. What he calls for is spiritual reinvention. An environmental scientist living in North Wales, he had just come back from a children's carol service which had deeply depressed him: "We've lost so much. There's been a 2,000 year takeover, the pagan festival has been supplanted by the birth of Jesus," he wailed. "It's time to recapture the midwinter energies. Christian patriarchy was afraid of death, decay and stillness so it deliberately planted the celebration of the birth of a boy-child right at solstice, to dispel that fear. Current ceremonies reflect a long history of alienation from the land, the nature, wilderness."

Influenced by druids, witches, Eastern mysticism and North American Indians, Taylor prefers to describe his religious practice as "shamanic". He hasn't yet worked out how he wants to celebrate midwinter. He stayed up on Thursday night meditating quietly by a fire with family and close friends. He says he is trying to find an appropriate ceremony and he doesn't just want it to be a personal, private event. He's envious of a witch friend who lives in Milton Keynes because the city is far more accommodating of her public ceremony than conservative, rural Wales.

"Solstice is about connecting with the cycles of nature, tapping into a deep stillness, thinking deep into all the energy of my being. It's about the necessity of death in order for there to be life. This is a turning point in the year as the days start to get longer. It can also be a turning point in your own consciousness. The only analogy I can think of is the seed which has to be vernalised in winter. It is the cold which energises it for its growth in the spring. It is as if human consciousness has to go into a deep stillness to experience this turning point."

What he wants is the ingredient that the modern-day Christmas/New Year of partying and drinking finds no room for — stillness. This may be couched in esoteric New Ageism but given the hollowness many feel in the middle of all the jollity, he may just be on to something.

Taking 'life' for political ends

The Myra Hindley case has exposed the distasteful spectacle of letting politicians decide how long lifers must serve, says TERENCE MORRIS

MYRA HINDLEY is correct — in one sense — when she describes herself as a "political prisoner", for any Home Secretary who took the step of releasing her from prison within the next few years would pay an electoral price for doing so.

Nor is it credible that the persistent calls for her release from the small group of well-meaning reformers will fall on other than an overwhelming number of unsympathetic ears. But while the campaign to free her seems doomed to fail it has the valuable effect of highlighting the unsatisfactory nature of the arrangements for releasing those who, though convicted of murder, may nevertheless be safely and acceptably released into the community to live useful if understandably obscure lives.

Almost everyone — with the apparent exception of the Government — seems agreed that the arrangements for the release of mandatory lifers are less than satisfactory. Perhaps those of us who campaigned for so long to get the death penalty abolished bear some responsibility.

Back in 1965 at the time of abolition, the dominant image of the "lifer" was of the kind of murderer whose crime had been committed in circumstances that presented considerable mitigation. Until 1948, when Parliament provided statutory authority for their release and determined the role of the Home Secretary regarding licensing and recall, a reprieve resulted from exercise of the Royal Prerogative of Mercy. Any subsequent — and essentially conditional — release occurred in the context of that same executive clemency.

These arrangements were further modified in 1967 with the establishment of the Parole Board which reviewed individual cases at regular intervals. By 1970, the Parole Board had recognised that it was, in effect, fulfilling a sentencing function since the primary question it needed to answer was whether the time served is (in its words) "appropriate to the crime".

But in 1983 Leon Brittan announced changes which established the principle whereby a life sentence would include a "tariff" which reflected the heinousness of the offence to be followed by a period of further detention based upon the estimated risk to the public were the offender to be released.

Although there was to be consultation with the judges, Brittan announced that for certain types of murder the prisoner would not be released until at least 20 years or longer had been served. In 1991 the then minister of state, Angela Rumbold, enunciated the principle, *ex-cathedra*, that release was a matter of mercy and privilege, and not a right which could be tested in the courts. By 1993 Michael Howard was not only reaffirming that principle but maintaining it was the right of the Secretary of State to revise upwards the retributive tariff at a later stage, should he change his mind and consider an early release would be unacceptable to the public.

Seemingly at a stroke, the corridors of the Home Office were translated into those of Kafka's Castle and the careful exercise of executive discretion laid open to veto by ill-informed public prejudice. That Howard's encyclical of 1993 is inconsistent with a number of statements by his predecessors, including Leon Brittan, seems not to have concerned him. If this is, indeed, a statement of penal philosophy, it suggests he has more in common with the Whiggish Lord John Russell than the Toryism of Rab Butler or Douglas Hurd.

> The Home Office has become Kafka's Castle where decisions are set by public prejudice

In conveying to Myra Hindley the news that for her, life is going to mean just that, a whole series of questions were posed in which whether she actually deserves to stay in prison until she dies is neither here nor there.

The central question is whether the executive, in the person of the Home Secretary, ought to exercise a quasi-judicial role or whether sentencing is a matter for the judges whom we appoint as the *custos mores* of our society and who are above the instrumental world of politics.

The problem is one of urgency, as the House of Commons Home Affairs Committee implicitly recognised this week when it reached its preliminary conclusion that decisions about the tariff and release should be removed from the Home Secretary.

There are several ways out of the maze. One is to abandon the mandatory life sentence, a course which finds favour with many distinguished lawyers and judges — but not the Home Affairs Committee — and give the judges power to sentence as they see fit. It would mean, perhaps, a future Hindley or West getting 75 years or natural life, but a provoked and battered wife 12 months probation.

Another is to constitute a Life Sentence Review Authority with both judicial and lay membership before which prisoners would have the right of audience, whose proceedings would be conducted in public and whose reasoned decisions would be published.

One thing is certain; for criminal justice to enjoy public confidence it must be open and above the mire of politics.

Terence Morris is Emeritus Professor of Criminology and Criminal Justice at the University of London and a vice-president of the Howard League

Being uncivil to the service

LORD BANCROFT (An ethos up for sale, December 20) is right to draw attention to the consequences of the Government's decision to privatise part of the Civil Service Commission. Taken with the announcement earlier this year, that senior public servants will in future be employed on contracts remunerated on the PRP method, the Government is cutting close to the heart of the best standards in our public administraiton.

We have inherited a system of independent selection, promotion by merit, and political independence: and it is hard to see how that can now survive undamaged. Crucially, we have not been told who will make the selection, and what role ministers will play in the appointment of the most senior civil servants.

Questions on these issues put in the House of Lords debate on February 1 have not been fully answered. Those wishing for more information and background would find the Hansard account worth looking up. We do need more discussion of these measures and fuller realisation of the damage they are likely to cause.

Lord Bridges.
Former head of
the Home Civil Service,
House of Lords.
London SW1A QAA.

WHAT is Roger Freeman (Letters, December 22) trying to tell us? That the RAS is no longer needed because government departments are now recruiting direct? In that case, abolish it and accept the disintegration of a national asset; that the Civil Service is only one among a number of equally important "customers"? Then privatise the Civil Service and to hell with the consequences.

If the RAS is to become a private enterprise, what business is it of Mr Freeman's whether it "extends its operations to wider markets"? Governments are elected to protect the public interest, not to feather private nests. If this government understood this simple proposition, it might begin to understand why it has forfeited public confidence and respect.

David Gladstone.
1 Mountfort Terrace,
London N1 1JJ.

FROM the Times, April 16, 1807: "500 guineas will be given to any lady or gentleman who can procure the Advertiser a Permanent Situation of proportionate value in the Exchequer or any other office under the Government, where not more than three hours' daily attendance is required. Strict secrecy may be relied on if requisite."

The privatisation of the Civil Service's Recruitment and Assessment Service could perhaps produce a return to pre-Victorian values!

J S Preston.
3 South View,
Winchester SO22 5EL.

IF Sir Brian Barder (Letters, December 22) really thinks that Civil Service Selection Board assessors are good value because other government departments charge them out at only 25 per cent of their true cost, then the sooner we have some outsiders involved the better. Perhaps future selection panels should ask candidates who they think pays for the other 75 per cent.

John Godfrey.
89 Kew Green,
Richmond, Surrey TW9 3AH.

A child's place in Europe

WE are writing to draw attention to a little reported aspect of discussion on the forthcoming Inter-Governmental Conference: the proposal by the European Council's Reflection Group, to "promote European values."

We would like to see more attention given to European values in relation to children and families. As all member states have ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the European Union should, in our view, be able to act corporately as well as individually to make children's rights a reality.

Similary, we believe it is important to facilitate a European dimension to national family policy, enabling some current European initiatives, such as parental leave, to be considered not only as an equality or labour market issue but also in terms of family policy.

Whilst most children and families live in their own countries and are therefore most affected by national policy and practice, the closer integration of the EU involves a growing number of families moving from one country to another and the development of policies which can have considerable implications for children and families. For example, the "open frontier" policy cuts across national policies for police checks on those employed with access to children.

Whilst we support the principle of subsidiarity and would not advocate supplanting national policy and practice in these areas, we believe that, given current developments, national provision is being undermined by a failure of policy as a European level.

It is essential that a framework is provided at this level to enable member states to address those issues which require a European solution and we urge the Government to support these proposals.

Bronwen Cohen.
Tom White.
Phillip Noyes.
Jan Burnell.
Fiona Ross.
Children in Scotland,
5 Shandwick Place,
Edinburgh, EH2 4RG.

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Last thoughts for Christmas

NICHOLAS Walter (Letters, December 20) shows that there is still a widespread ignorance about the truth status of the Christmas essentials.

True: life, teaching (mostly) and death of Jesus. False: almost all the details of his birth in Matthew and Luke, which are a pastiche of unrelated passages in the Old Testament supplemented by pure invention. Metaphorical: interpretation of Jesus as Son of God, salvation of mankind, etc. All statements about God are, of course, metaphorical not literal.

Merry Christmas (literally).

Christopher Mordaunt.
Brixton Council of Churches,
6 Thornton Rd,
London, SW12 0JU.

REGARDING your article Nightmare before Christmas (G2, December 20), what sort of mad world of haves and haves-nots are we becoming when you talk about a range of toys priced at £9.99 as being "almost stocking fillers"? What sort of stockings? Pure silk?

Belinda Kirby.
28 Prince Edward's Road,
Lewes,
East Sussex BN7 1BE.

THE fact that dentists are not allowed to return extracted teeth (Faith, Hope and the Tooth Fairy, Leader, December 19) may be seen as another incentive for kids to brush their teeth well and regularly — no tooth, no cash.

Francis Pascale.
50 St Pega's Rd,
Peakirk,
Peterborough PE6 7NF.

WOULD some kind person offer a home at Christmas, to our beloved Deputy Prime Minister and save him, from the rigours of living in the Radio 4 studios.

Margaret O'Keefe.
168 Welford Road,
Northampton NN2 8AA.

Letters to the Editor may be faxed on 0171 837 4530 or sent by post to 119 Farringdon Road, London EC1R 3ER, and by e-mail to letters@guardian.co.uk.

Watching a family at war

OF ALL of the country's assets none has been subject to more inefficient management than the royal household. In view of the Conservative Government's predilection to privatise all of our public services, I cannot understand why this has been overlooked.

There are clearly substantial under-used assets which could be disposed of by the buyer, and the saving to the Exchequer in the Civil List and the upkeep of old, unsuitable and fire-prone buildings must be substantial.

It seems to me to be an attractive candidate for a management buyout and would afford an excellent opportunity to reward Christopher Soames with the lucrative post of chairman and chief executive.

A B Crews.
1 Dellfield Close,
Beckenham,
Kent BR3 5UJ.

ORDERS? Orders? (Queen orders royal divorce, December 12). If there was any fleeting doubt as to whether a critical review was required as to the suitability of this family to be in some way looked up to, or identified with, must now have been swept away. My only interest is to watch royal apologists justify this decree.

John E Hooson.
Plas Iolyn,
Pentrefoelas,
Betws-y-Coed,
Gwynedd LL24 0LP.

THE Princess of Wales does not immediately have to face the problem of obtaining the Queen's approval for an appointment as an ambassador to one of the important nations which she visits officially as a member of the royal family. It will take many years to prepare for the office.

The autumn of 1996 would be the start of three years' study for a degree, preferably at Oxford or Cambridge. Subsequently admitted to the Foreign Service, there will be several years in the Foreign Office, or as a junior in an English embassy. Then there will be junior position in a major embassy, or as the representative in a minor one.

At the last period of her career is the possibility of the appointment as ambassador in the embassy of one of the great countries she now visits officially.

C Z Purcell.
Bimport House,
Shaftesbury,
Dorset SP7 8AT.

SURELY the procedure regarding a royal divorce settlement will be exactly the same as for the rest of the population? Diana gets half of everything Charles owns, then a year or so later the Child Support Agency makes him give her half of what's left. It could be an interesting year ahead for the folk in Cornwall.

Anthony Purcell.
Bouverie Road,
Chelmsford,
Essex CM2 0UE.

MYTHS and legends may take strange turns — but to find it necessary to state that "Diana will still be mother of the future king" is bizarre. Perhaps the palace would have preferred a hairy monster to have given birth to the future king.

V Harding.
11 Portal Close,
West Norwood,
London SE27 0BN.

A REFERENDUM on who the public would like to be Queen would show a vast majority prefer Princess Diana. It is common sense that the mother of the future King should be Queen. It's a perverse system that allows a divorced King to consider another divorced woman as Queen whilst the mother of the future monarch is still living.

Name and address supplied.

HE got married, so the prince tells us, because his dad told him to. Now in middle age, he is to get divorced because his mum has told him to. I suppose we are now expected to be grateful that a person of such maturity is still available to fill the minor role of our constitutional head of state.

Tim Bell.
82 Burlington Road,
Sherwood,
Nottingham NG5 2GS.

THE Church of England was happy to marry this young couple but when they ran into difficulties no special prayers were offered for "those whom God has joined together, let no man (or woman) put assunder." How can it be?

J M Geering.
The Old Orchard,
34 Lowfields,
Little Eversden,
Cambridge CB3 7HJ.

MY increasing irritation with the Guardian reached its peak this morning. Six and a half pages of yet more drivel about the royal divorce, half a page of which took up most of the front page, which, in its new format, carries precious little news at the best of times. Yes, it may be a constitutional issue, but surely this could be dealt with in a commentary from one of your specialist journalists.

Sue Gold.
39 Oakleigh Avenue,
London N20 9JE.

AS an atheist and a republican I never thought the day would arrive when I would feel even the slightest twinge of sympathy for a member of the establishment. But I've always found myself siding with the underdog and, especially at this time of year, the person I feel for is *Major* Parker Bowles. Christmas must be a particularly poignant time for people in his position. Has someone from the Argentinian side of Di's family "disappeared" him?

D A Jones.
65 Constance Close,
Witham,
Essex CM8 1XL.

More application needed on those A-level results

SIR Ron Dearing's efforts are commendable if the leaks (Dearing plans applied A-levels, December 18) are reliable. But the bridge between academic and vocational courses for the 16 to 19 age group may not be credible without availability of apprenticeships on a much larger scale.

The practitioners (ie teachers and professionals) know, to their cost, that vocational qualifications and A-levels were not strictly comparable, despite boastful claims to the contrary made by politicians and educationists.

The specialised nature of "old" A-levels may have been ideally suited for a three-year honours degree of an old university up to nearly two decades ago, but it may not provide a suitable base for lateral extension of one's own faculties to the problems of a rather different world.

We have now entrants from a much wider social base into higher education, whose minimum length of duration must be extended if we are going to have broader and applied A-levels with such uniformity. Besides, it is much too easy to get much higher grades in any examination under modularised schemes.

You have rightly pointed out that the standards of vocational courses must be raised. One way to achieve that is by the introduction of examinations (at the end of any course) based on lateral learning and thinking.

Instead of yearning for the "good old days" of highly-selective entry into higher education from a narrow social base, what we now need to strive for is a vastly-improved compulsory education system in the state sector.

Only then is a genuine "premier division" of higher education centres likely to emerge from such an enhanced base. That is how most other successful economies have developed their major national assets.

Biman Ghosh.
School of Engineering,
Electronics and Physics,
John Moores University,
Byrom St,
Liverpool L3 3AF.

Worcester sauce, no thanks

ROBERT Worcester (Letters, December 22) is wrong to suggest that our innovations in polling techniques have had no effect. Pollsters using traditional methods record a lead for Labour of between 30 and 39 per cent. Our new techniques result in a lead for Labour of 17 per cent; clearly they do have an effect.

We do not pretend to have found "the solution to why the polls got it wrong in 1992" but we do believe we are on the right track. Conversely, Mr Worcester chooses to ignore the evidence of last year's Euro-elections. It was only by taking account of past votes that some pollsters got close to the result. He also ignores the local election results of 1994 and 1995, which both imply that unadjusted polls are biased to Labour.

Mr Worcester is also mistaken to suggest weighting by past-voting is no longer working. On our telephone polls, the impact of weighting by past-voting is small because recall is accurate. The impact of past-vote weighting on face-to-face polls is much bigger because they all suggest Labour won in 1992.

Nick Sparrow.
Managing Director,
ICM Research,
56 Mortimer St,
London W1N 7DG.

ROBERT Worcester is not comparing like with like. I can sure as hell remember what I voted in every election in my life, but I cannot remember what I have told the two pollsters who have asked me my intentions in the past two years. All I know is that it was deliberately misleading. The first, is serious voting; the second is just a game.

Peter Shield.
20 Willerby Rd,
Nottingham NG5 4PB.

Positively our last judgment on the matter of Myra Hindley

THE Myra Hindley case highlights one of the many flaws in the English judicial system; that of the excessive influence of the Home Secretary in the determination of the length of sentence served by a "life" offender. This is compounded by the inability of the prisoner to make a coherent statement regarding their suitability for return to outside life due to lack of opportunity to demonstrate any integration with the general public and, therefore, any positive effects of such association.

Myra Hindley has been forced to undergo a prolonged period of public self-examination, so intensive that in open society it would be defined as obsessive behaviour by the psychological profession. She is a political prisoner and the Home Secretary must consider the evidence of medical experts which suggest she is unlikely to repeat offences and allow her to make a positive contribution to society for the remainder of her life.

Steve Edbury.
Shipley, W Yorks BD17 7LE.

TWO things were clear long before you published Myra Hindley's article.

1. By using the relatives of the victims of the dreadful crimes for commercial gain over 30 years, the popular press has made it far harder for the relatives' grievous wounds to heal. In this respect, the popular press is an accessory after the fact.

2. Miss Hindley is a citizen of this country and has a *right* to justice. Provided, as seems to be the case, the professionals consider that she is not now a danger to the public, the extension of her imprisonment after 30 years has nothing to do with justice and everything to do with vengeance and a fear of making unpopular and electorally-damaging decisions.

Frank Regan.
Cheshire.

ROGER Gale, media spokesman for the Conservative Party, says (December 19) that your article by Myra Hindley was "a publicity stunt on behalf of a murderess". Is there any point in society maintaining a penal reform system, and what hope is there for future society, if we do not accept the possibility of change both individually and collectively? Is a non-belief in change what his party stands for?

Robert Stewart.
Lansdowne Crescent,
Glasgow.

IF Myra Hindley had not met Ian Brady, then Lesley Ann Downey, Edward Evans, John Kilbride, Pauline Reade and Keith Bennett might also be married, have children and maybe even grandchildren. They too, might have been awarded degrees from the Open University and be indulging themselves by reflecting on how they had changed in the past 30 years.

Frances Redding.
Burley-in-Wharfedale,
Ilkley,
West Yorks LS29 7PL.

ACCEPTING Myra Hindley's contrition as sincere, she is entitled to lay claim to Christian forgiveness. But forgiveness need not lead to a restoration to a full life in civil society.

Name and address supplied.

IF Myra Hindley really *had* changed she would now empathise with the suffering of the children she harmed so terribly and with the life sentence of anguish to which she has condemned their parents. If she had such empathy she would be the last person in the world to call for her release, knowing how much less her suffering is than theirs — and knowing that theirs has no end.

Moyra Bremner.
Address supplied.

IF Myra Hindley was sane at the time of the offences I don't understand how she has remained sane with these memories and that responsibility.

Janet Toye.
Hove, E Sussex BN3 6FL.

HOW many of the correspondents writing to express outrage at the Guardian's decision to publish the Hindley letter are, in fact, true blue Telegraph readers? Many of the options expressed are *not* those of any of the many Guardian readers I know.

Richard Vernon.
London N19 3DA.

A Country Diary

NORTH PEMBROKESHIRE: Over 30 years ago parts of the Preseli hills above Rosebush were planted with spruce trees. What was once the largest farmhouse surrounded by trees on three sides. Now the crop is ripe and 25 acres have been felled. Rosebush is a village built for the miners who worked in the old slate quarries. Although a 19th century attempt to turn it into a resort failed, it still has the lake which was part of the grand design. Caravans and dragonflies congregate there in the summer. The miners' houses have been enlarged, but the spoil heaps still dominate the scene. Each piece of shale shows a different pattern — it's like a child's treasure house that Santa forgot.

Once past the mines we were immediately walking up through pine trees. A machine, reputed locally to have cost half a million pounds, has cut down each tree, stripped its branches, left them lying in green lines, and cut each trunk into equal long lengths. Another machine grasped the pieces to carry them off to piles lining one of the forest tracks. We walked between two of those timber mountains, neat trunks exuding resin, towering more than 20 feet above us. They filled the air with a scent which made me slightly light-headed, tipsy, elated and finally keen to leave those great trees behind to clear my head.

The house is now completely exposed. On the other side of the hills a house snuggles into the ground with trees for protection from the north wind. But there they have a variety of pines, giving blue and green colours, larches and birches, now glowing red — a beautiful shelter, summer and winter. Plant a tree for Christmas!

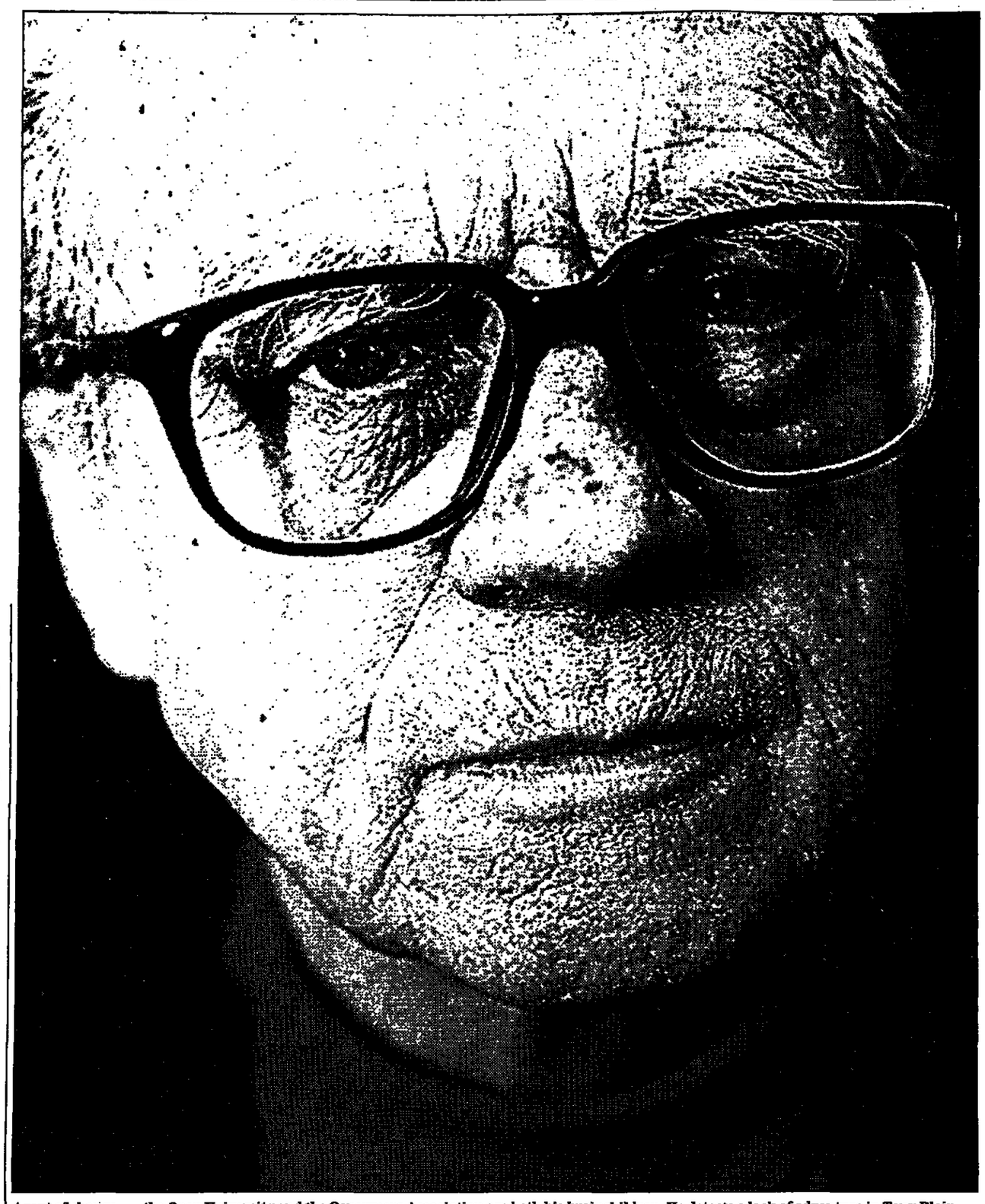
AUDREY INSCH

هكذا من الاصل

هكذا من الاصل

His ideas have improved millions of lives but now – at 80 – Lord Young has turned urban warrior. JOHN CUNNINGHAM took him on. Photograph: DAVID SILLITOE

The art of ageing with attitude



Agent of change . . . the Open University and the Consumers Association are both his brainchildren. He detects a lack of adventure in Tony Blair

LORD YOUNG of Dartington has not survived for 80 years, sound in wind, limb and grey matter, by being reckless. So you might think he was untypically dicing with what remains of his life when, just recently, a couple of Kentucky Fried cartons and some chicken bones chucked from a car crossed his path, and he decided enough was enough.

No matter that it was dark, or that he was in London's East End, or that the car contained three big blokes. Catching up with the Ford Escort at traffic lights, he stuffed the garbage back among the occupants with a tart: "I think this belongs to you."

This surprise retaliation against London's new street code — drop it and piss off — worked. "One of the youths said 'What the fuck,' " recalls Lord Young, then the lights changed, and they drove off perplexed — much to his relief.

The expletive is almost drowned by the division bell in the writing room of the House of Lords. You can easily spot elderly peers there; not by their grey heads, but by their gait. They either have sticks or else they shuffle along like the mildly demented. Not Michael Young: he's leanly off in a walking race down the corridor to vote.

Speed and energy are the least remarkable of his virtues: almost every year, it seems, Michael Young comes up with some surprises, generally of a socially innovative kind. The Open University, the Consumers' Association and the University of the Third Age are three of his best known brainchildren, but he's parented a host of others. And is begetting them still: a radio-based OU for South Africa; a school for social entrepreneurs, and a college to train officiants at funeral services.

And now, half a century on from Labour's bright moment, for which he wrote the party's 1945 manifesto heralding its commitment to the welfare state, he hopes to see another victory that could bring a new phase of socialism, for which he has plans.

But Michael Young's big surprise of 1995, bigger than his 80th birthday in August, came last month. He got married again, two years after the death from cancer of his beloved second wife, Sasha. The Daily Mail raised an ambiguous eyebrow at the new Lady Young: "She is a middle-class German hatmaker. He is a socialist peer more than twice her age. . . they married in church and lit sparklers to celebrate their wedding vows."

But there was no astonishment among those close to him: Young's life and work always echo his belief in the structures and institutions on which we have immemorially relied. So — though he is too private to speak about this — we may infer that marriage, and remarriage, is a viable option for a greyhead who has designs on the coming century.

> Elderly peers are easy to spot. They either have sticks or else they shuffle along like the mildly demented. But not Young

The ceremony tells quite a lot about Young. Sunday morning at a Tower Hamlets church; the wedding incorporated into the normal service; champagne for guests and for the rest of the surprised congregation. A ceremony celebrated in the East End, Young's real manor. That's where the Institute of Community Studies, which he founded 40 years ago, is based and where much of his work as a sociologist was done, particularly for his seminal book (with Peter Willmott) Family And Kinship In East London.

It's in the East End that Young has spied the best and worst of humankind. His research was done in Bethnal Green. And, at a time when the Kray brothers were growing up there, he could write in relation to the 1950s: "There has been a fall in the number of broken homes almost entirely as a result of the drop in the death rate." And even though part of the cramped working community was beginning to relocate in new-town Essex, he was discovering social ties that still bound whole streets together.

Now, of course, society is failing, and Young was lucky that those traffic lights changed before the three youths could sort him out as a meddlesome old codger. Young admits that he's romantic about East End family patterns. But in the midst of all the marital break-ups and the economic breakdowns, he discerns new social formations.

"People will become adapted to instability and insecurity because they've seen it all around them. There will be less emotional investment in relationships, and emotions will be spread more thinly among more people as people defend themselves against the pain and distress of break-ups."

This may sound bleak, but Young manages to convey his thoughts in the most unchilling of tones: "I think people will form family-like relationships with colleagues and friends to provide different kinds of roots . . . roots being the kind of bonds we need but whose efficacy we don't think too much about at the moment."

Young reckons the beginnings of this new social order are in place already. Eventually, it might become the large-scale pattern of emotional sustainability for many people as even nuclear families are pared away. But he warns that even this might not be enough unless children get off to a good start — cherished and nourished by parents, certainly for their first 10 years. And preferably two parents: he's quite emphatic about that.

But Lord Young is a sociologist at heart, not a futurologist. After all, he's devised a "family covenant" to express our familial bonds in a fresh and relevant way, and made bland crematoria services more focused, so the rituals and remedies he proposes are eminently practical ones, based on human structures.

The latest gleam in his eye is for a new type of housing association designed to create and cater for three- and four-generation communities. Typically, he says tenants would to have to fulfil obligations to help others in neighbourly ways, set out in a tenancy agreement: "The young to the old, the old to the young."

You might think his own loneliness and extinction would be upmost in his mind at this stage in his life. And yet he continues to strive, in a society where structures and institutions separate us, to fill gaps. Like E M Forster, his mantra seems to be Only Connect.

He remains linked to his own losses: "I think if one has ever loved, one feels lonely for individual people. Two in particular I feel almost continually lonely about. My foster mother, Dorothy Elmhirst and my late wife. But I still have as much delight as I've ever had in ideas that might have some practical application.

"And anyway, I don't feel any older than I did when I was 19; perhaps less old really and I don't think I have any less energy — mental energy anyway."

That energy first brought him centre stage when he moved from the think-tank Political and Economic Planning to work in the Labour Party's research department from 1945 to 1951. He speaks of his luck in being around then, with a sense that sweeping social and economic change was possible. "War shakes people up because it takes them out of their ordinary grooves in a big way, and that is very useful. Most of the big revolutions have been associated with wars, not just the big bloody revolutions, but the social ones like we had in 1945, that was continuing many of the things that happened in the war. 'Fair shares for all' became a general, all-party slogan."

However, his enthusiasm for a period of Labour in office under Tony Blair is tempered by a cool thought: "I fear the minds of the present leadership — some of them — haven't been shaken up. They're not bold enough. They've accepted enough of the Thatcherism stuff. They're prepared to start from where she and her successors left off, rather than seeing if there couldn't be a different starting point. Of course, there can't be a totally different starting point — the continuities are too important for that."

Young's main complaint against Blair and Co is that the plight of the disadvantaged in inner cities isn't being focused on: higher taxes and income redistribution might be low on their agenda, but they're on top of his. "The audience being played to [by Labour] is by and large the relatively well-heeled. They may have the majority of the votes, but they don't have the majority of the problems."

The flirting with politicians and their parties, and the scepticism, is an old Young theme. It explains why he considered a political career in the 1940s, but then, as he says, took a sidestep into social research and reform "confusing socialism and sociology in my mind as much as I possibly could". It explains his temporary alliance with the Lib Dems before he returned to Labour's fold, but even now, knowing full well that the small stage rather than the big arena is where he's best made his mark, he's tempted to intervene, given that, if Labour wins, the margin will be tight. "If only they would have some form of understanding with the Liberals, they could afford to take more risks," he says in exasperation at his party's reluctance to announce policy intitatives.

"I have been thinking of trying to expedite that process," he says. Privately commissioned opinion polls in 60 marginal constituencies where people revealed their second choices might bring about an understanding. He's pondering whether to take this step. The division bell goes again, and Lord Young scampers into the lobby, contemplating a little altrusitic mischief that might *really* change things.

Still hazy after all those wilderness years

The BBC series on Labour's traumas in the eighties failed to come up with any new answers because it didn't ask the right questions, says ROY HATTERSLEY

FOR THOSE of us who lived so long on locusts and wild honey, The Wilderness Years — the BBC2 series which ended on Monday — made fascinating viewing. There we all were, young, eager and caught in the act of making the speeches and defending the policies which — according to the programme — condemned Labour to almost 20 years of opposition.

It was clear from the way we commented on our collective past that most of us felt that we had something to regret. But Tony Benn took pride in recalling the years in which he tore Labour apart. Neil Kinnock, by contrast, constantly under-valued his achievements in putting it back together. Tom Sawyer's appearance became smoother as he changed from militant trade union leader to modernising general secretary. Peter Mandelson, moving deftly from the heels of one leadership candidate to another, revealed an affinity with Old Labour that I had not previously recognised. Harold Wilson's industrial policy and Mandelson's rise to fame were both built on assiduously picking winners.

But the programme had a problem. From time to time it turned from feature into editorial. Had it simply charted the self-destruction of a great party it would have been a fascinating exercise in political archaeology. Unfortunately, the producers felt it necessary to have a theory about the causes of decline. Indeed they believed so strongly in the need to express a point of view, they developed two of them. However the two theses were contradictory. One, developed in the third programme, was the contention that men — not measures — brought about Labour's downfall. So the episode was peppered with examples of Neil Kinnock enjoying himself — proof he lacked gravitas. The final hour put the blame on policies not personalities. Crazy idealism brought about four consecutive defeats — the theory ran. So the new leadership has chosen cynical populism as the path to power. Technically, the programmes were so good that I felt real regret that they developed two mutually exclusive but equally nonsensical ideas.

I have never disguised my disagreement with some of New Labour's policies — education, tax and public spending in particular. But anyone who believes that they have been adopted for reasons of pure electoral expediency misunderstands both the party and its leader. New Labour has become a social democratic party of the European (as distinct from the Owenite) variety. It wants to ameliorate the suffering of the disadvantaged and the dispossessed and finance its compassion by increasing the efficiency of the economy. It represents a legitimate and well-established trend of Labour thinking. The only change is that, for the first time since the party was formed, the ameliorators — rather than a rag-bag of idealogues who want to change the nature of society — are now in an overwhelming majority. They will form a wholly decent and entirely desirable government. Their mistake is the conviction that they represent the spirit of the age whilst other strands of belief are unrealistic and outdated.

Most of us in the Labour Party have noticed that Britain is more prosperous than it was in 1945, that changes in industrial organisation have undermined the strength of trade unionism and that "choice" is the battle cry of the new middle classes. The argument that must go on is not about the nature of modern society. It concerns how radical politicians should react to the way we live now. Labour's tragedy — totally unrecognised in The Wilderness Years — is its long-term failure to construct a consistent and coherent theory of government which matches the new reality with the old ethic. And do not tell me that the old ethic is itself outdated. Last week (in his critique of the series) Tony Blair described Labour as committed, amongst other things, to *equality*. Patricia Hewitt, who evolved through the series from strident tribune of the people to personification of not very radical-chic, spent two elections trying to keep the E-word out of the campaign vocabulary. But in a party of principle — which is undoubtedly what Tony Blair wants to maintain — the genie keeps popping out of the bottle.

Don't mention the E-word . . . Patricia Hewitt tried to keep equality out of Labour's vocabulary PHOTOGRAPH: FRANK MARTIN

Tony Blair was right in his criticism of the programme to say that the party's malaise went back not 20 but 40 years to the time when, in Tony Crosland's words, Labour became "the party in favour of what we did between 1945 and 1950". Harold Wilson then made the rejection of ideology a major political virtue. And for most of the time after he left the leadership (not to mention several of his Downing Street years) Labour talked itself into the nonsensical conclusion that it had to choose between absurdly claiming to be a coherent theory of socialism and no theory of socialism at all. Refusing to nationalise the hundred major monopolies (when there are not a hundred major monopolies in the country) does not mean that public ownership, in all its forms, must be rejected for ever. Nor do our policies have to be a compromise between old fashioned socialism and reality. We still need an honest and intelligent willingness to grasp the principle and apply it to contemporary society.

The real failure of the years in the wilderness — for which *mea* amongst others *culpa* — was Labour's inability to understand that it needed an ethical framework on which to hang its programme. We clutched policies out of the air as if they were doves caught by a conjuror to impress his audience. The public wanted a philosophy not a performance. So when Margaret Thatcher came along with a clear ideological commitment she even impressed electors who found her ideology repugnant. The question that The Wilderness Years should have asked was: "Has the Labour Party learned the lesson of the two decades when it seemed to stand for nothing very consistent?" It is not a matter of left versus right or plots in favour of one personality or another. Labour needs to explain how equality — still its big idea — can improve the modern world. The Wilderness Years did not even ask the right question.

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Celebrities pick the personalities and performances of 1995

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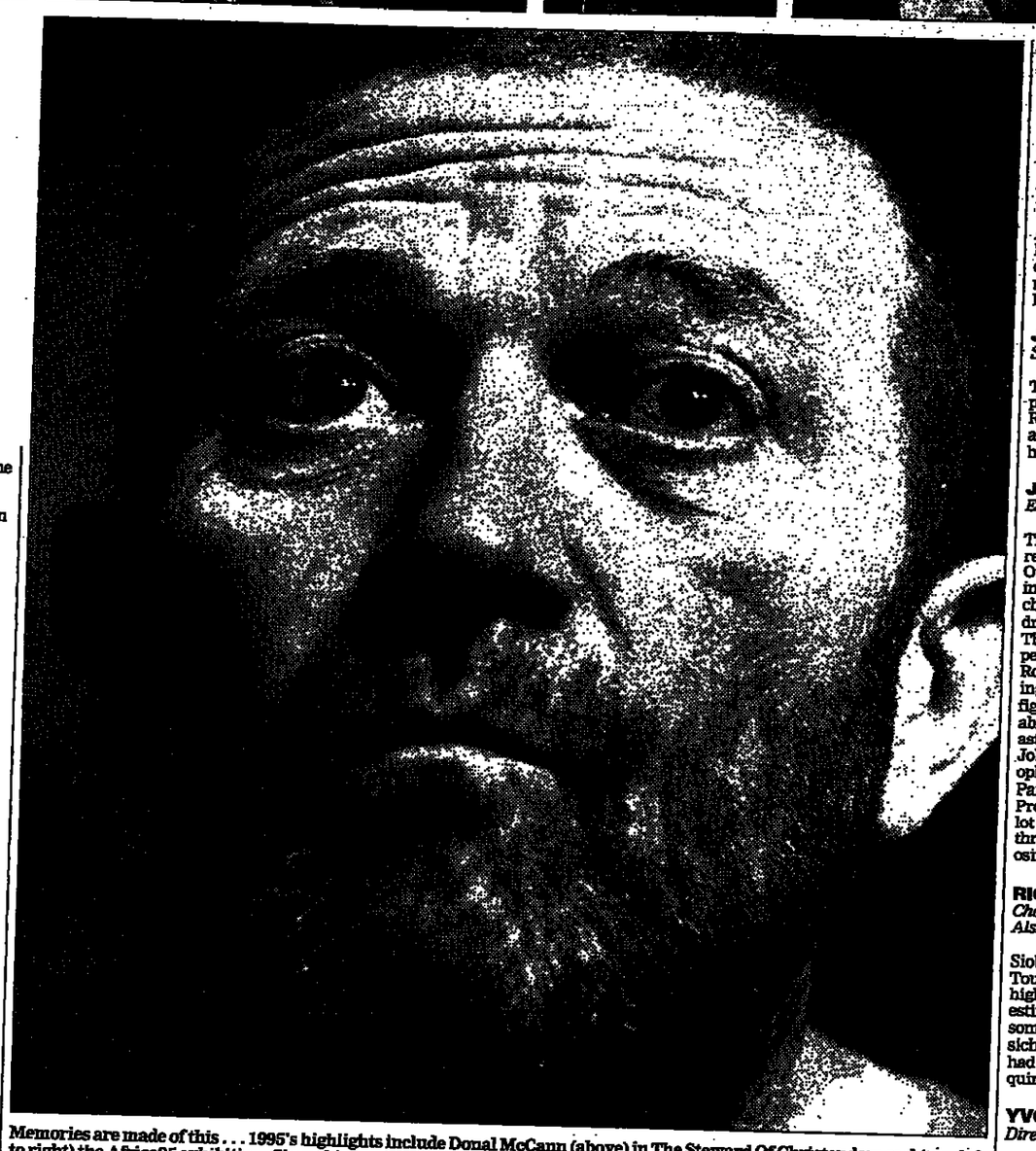

Memories are made of this . . . 1995's highlights include Donal McCann (above) in The Steward Of Christendom and (top, left to right) the Africa95 exhibition, Chungking Express, Norma Winstone and Pride And Prejudice(with Jennifer Ehle, right)

VIRGINIA BOTTOMLEY
Secretary of State for National Heritage

The British arts scene has a worldwide reputation for its creativity and originality. This year, as always, I have found it exciting and challenging. I have seen many highlights — one was the Music for Youth Schools Prom, with many talented young musicians giving outstanding performances.

ISAAC JULIEN
Film-maker

The most inspiring thing I've seen is George Wolfe's musical Bring In Da Noise Bring In Da Funk at the Public in New York. It's like a history of tap dancing which also tells the story of the struggles for black creativity in America, from the Harlem renaissance, through Hollywood, to the present day and has incredibly funny sketches about things like black men trying to get taxis, which is always a problem in New York.

DELLA GRACE
Photographer

An exhibition called Desire, a Scandinavian biennial now in Copenhagen, in which I'm showing my Hermaphrodyke series. I found Annette Frick's body parts in milk, Milch, quite stunning. Also the Venus Ramboy series — 6 x 4ft prints of beautiful boys — by the Canadian Evergon — and I also liked Ron Athey's Deliverance at the ICA.

KEN CAMPBELL
Performer and writer

David Icke, doing his show at the Friends Meeting House, I thought his Buildaburger routine was terrific. It's so well-researched. He doesn't wear a jersey these days but a sort of lady's silk blouse. He really makes the conspiracy-mongers' hearts skip a beat. There are these greens who are very bothered about Icke. You find yourself not criticising him lest you become one of these nerdy geezers.

RICHARD EYRE
Artistic director of the National Theatre

Bring In Da Noise Bring In Da Funk, at the Public Theatre in New York. It was original and unclassifiable. The New Yorker put it best when they called it, "a drama that charts, with heroic energy, the evolution of the African-American beat from its rural Southern beginnings to its northern urbanisation on to its present hip-hop incarnation."

ARTHUR SMITH
Comedian and playwright

Hearing Joshua Redman play in The Blue Note in New York. Fantastic. And in a non-smoking jazz club.

ANDY KERSHAW
Broadcaster

The International Friendship Exhibition in North Korea. It's the most extraordinary museum, virtually psychedelic, this vast concrete bunker got up to look like a pagoda in the mountains and it contains every single gift to the Great Leader, Kim Il Sung, and his son, the Dear Leader, Kim Jong Il. It's just mad. I calculated that if you stood in front of every exhibit and looked at it for 15 seconds it would take you three weeks, and that's without going to bed. It was the mundane things that made you think "What's this all about?" The Lebanese friendship association has given them a two-bar fire with glittering flame effect and Nicaragua's Sandinistas gave Kim Il Sung a stuffed crocodile standing on his hind legs and holding up a tray of drinks.

JEREMY ISAACS
Director of the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden

Death Of Yugoslavia took television history into a new dimension because of the programme makers' access to witnesses, enabling them to give the most hair-raisingly detailed account of the manoeuvres that were going on. One minute we were attending the meeting of the Yugoslav National Council and the meeting was suspended for a news bulletin in which representatives who have been at the meeting are seen negotiating to buy arms from another country. We then go to interview the people buying and selling arms in that deal. That account brought contemporary history to life in a dazzling way.

JEFFREY ARCHER
Novelist

The Monet To Gauguin exhibition at the Royal Academy was staggeringly good. Changing Places, by Ronald Harwood, at the Comedy Theatre, was the best modern play this year — an original way of doing a trial and based on a true story. A Midsummer Night's Dream at the Barbican was exceptional. Now let me see what I have raved about at the cinema. No, I can't think of anything. I'm not a knocker by nature. I'm an enthusiast. Actually, the film Apollo 13 was a good story. Like everyone else, I thought Pride And Prejudice was wonderful. It shows you don't need sex and violence to boost the ratings.

PAT NEVIN
Tranmere and Scotland footballer

The biggest thing for me has been the alternative music scene. I caught up with it this year, doing some deejaying for a radio station in the north-west, and I was astonished to find it more vibrant than it's ever been. Garbage are excellent — a mishmash of everything I like. The singer has got a brilliant voice, and they've got great Nirvana-influenced tunes. There is also great reggae dub stuff around, like Smith & Mighty. Pulp Fiction is my favourite film. Tarantino approaches film-making differently from anyone else. He has great style and has this incredible ability to catch the mood of different types of speech.

TONY BENN
MP for Chesterfield

I've really enjoyed Rory Bremner this year. He understands what the political process is about and his impersonations are not only very brilliant but, like any great artist, he interprets the world in a way that highlights its salient characteristics without making them absurd. He is the great cartoonist of our time — we have never been able to see his like before television came — holding up a mirror too ourselves and allowing us to laugh at our foibles.

NEIL JORDAN
Film director and novelist

The film Chungking Express was wonderful. Hong Kong is producing remarkable stuff at the moment, but this director is extra special. If Godard had ever bothered with beauty he could have produced something like this. I also heard Melissa Etheridge on the radio. She was rather good — sounded like Joni Mitchell on crack.

ALAN PLATER
Television writer and novelist

My television highlight of the year was Jake's Progress. My own play, Shooting The Legend, at the Theatre Royal Newcastle, directed by Max Roberts, was brilliant. Muriel's Wedding was very funny, painful, witty and clever. Sebastian Faulks's Birdsong was a fine book, as was The Far Corner, by Harry Pearson — about football in the north-east. I also enjoyed a concert by a jazz singer called Norma Winstone, in Stoke Newington.

HOWARD BRENTON
Playwright

My highlight of the year was Toby Stephens playing Coriolanus at the Swan in Stratford. He is a great young actor and it was the real business.

BILL KENWRIGHT
Impresario

Donal McCann, in The Steward Of Christendom, was fantastic. It was an amazing performance, the thing this year that made me go "wow!".

TERRY EAGLETON
Warton professor of literature at Oxford

Arthur Miller came to Oxford to give his inaugural lecture, to talk about his life in the theatre. My choice is not a work of art perhaps, but it felt like one. He had tremendous power and presence, a great sense of energy — he was so engaged with the issues.

STEPHEN FREARS
Film director

My girlfriend Anne Rothenstein's exhibition at the Montpelier Gallery because she's the best painter in the world — it's called true love! It's also called true appreciation!

MELVYN BRAGG
Broadcaster and novelist

Seeing Judi Dench and the rest of that extraordinary cast in Rodney Ackland's Absolute Hell at the National Theatre.

ALAN BLEASDALE
Television writer

Andrew Davies's adaptation of Pride And Prejudice — especially Jennifer Ehle's performance. Also Paula Milne's The Politician's Wife.

JACK CUNNINGHAM
Shadow Heritage Secretary

The Royal Shakespeare Company's season at the Theatre Royal in Newcastle in February and March each year is a hugely uplifting experience.

JOHN DRUMMOND
Ex-director of the Proms

There are three things that really thrilled me this year. One was an exhibition, Drawing The Line, at the Whitechapel Gallery. I never thought drawing could be so evocative. The second was Dan Massey's performance as Furtwangler in Ronald Harwood's play, Taking Sides. Knowing he'd been fighting cancer and was still able to come up with this was astonishing. The third was John Harle's playing of the saxophone in the Birtwistle piece, Panic, at the last night of the Proms. There had been quite a lot of feeling against it, but he threw this piece off with virtuosity. It was very special for me.

RICHARD ALSTON
Choreographer, Richard Alston Dance Company

Siobhan Davies's The Art of Touch at Sadler's Wells was the high point. It was really interesting to see her working on something so different — harpsichord pieces by Scarlatti. It had a wonderful, luminous, quirky quality.

YVONNE BREWSTER
Director of Talawa Theatre Co

The Africa95 exhibition at the Royal Academy. They were very well-chosen bits and it wasn't arty-farty, it was for the common people. There were lots of familiar bits but also unfamiliar ones — little carvings and the shoes belonging to a pharaoh with five holes for his toes, which made me laugh.

HOWARD HODGKIN
Artist

The last room of the Poussin show, which was filled with the most extraordinary landscapes, probably the summation of his life's work. The other is the Cézanne show in Paris. It reminds people what it's like to be a painter because the pictures are paintings first and descriptions of compositions second.

MARK-ANTHONY TURNAGE
Composer

The Steward Of Christendom was amazing. I discovered Sebastian Barry by chance when I went to Ireland to talk about an O'Casey play. I love the quality of his writing — he would make a good librettist.

RICHARD WILLIAMS sees Bob Dylan and Patti Smith team up in a nostalgic double bill

Electric history lesson

AS THEIR duet came to a graceful close, Bob Dylan leaned past the microphone and brushed a quick kiss across Patti Smith's cheek. They had been singing Dark Eyes, a lovely, regretful ballad rescued from one of his sloppy mid-eighties albums, and Smith had clearly enjoyed the challenge of trying to harmonise with a man to whom a written melody is as much use as an airline schedule to a homing pigeon.

This inspired double-bill, touring in a short series of pre-Christmas concerts at small East Coast venues, invited a generation to get out of the house and get back in touch with its dreams of freedom. "They were the soundtrack," one listener announced to his friends in the balcony of the Electric Factory, an unpretentiously converted light industrial unit holding about 1,000. "Dylan was high school, Patti was college."

Smith, whose mid-seventies albums prefigured the punk movement, has not toured with a band since 1979. The set she delivered with her band in Philadelphia relied mostly on familiar material, beginning with Because The Night and peaking with a storming version of Rock' n' Roll Nigger.

She performed a version of Dylan's Wicked Messenger which showed off not only her own stronger, deeper voice but also the improved playing of her old sidemen, the guitarist Lenny Kaye and the drummer Jay Dee Daugherty.

The second half of the set included a delicate new song called About A Boy, dedicated to Kurt Cobain but also, in her words, "for the boy within us all which we'd rather see survive".

Featuring a typically inventive contribution from Tom Verlaine, once of Television, whose guitar solos and accompaniments illuminated the second half of the set, it promised much for Smith's new album, due in the spring.

As for Dylan, his concert performances have grown in conviction throughout the nineties, after reaching a nadir at the beginning of the decade. He looks in reasonable shape and excellent spirits at the moment, and this two-hour show contained intricate, subdued arrangements of The Man In The Long Black Coat and It's All Over Now, Baby Blue that were as fine as anything he has done in concert since his youth.

Unfortunately his current obsession is with loud variations on the 12-bar blues-boogie, and most of the second hour, after the duet with Smith, amounted to little more than a travesty of the music he made with Mike Bloomfield and Robbie Robertson 30 years ago. Somehow this seemed a small enough price to pay for the chance to hear his reshaping of each verse of All Along The Watchtower, its overfamiliarity banished by the sort of inventiveness and clarity that could only come from an artist who is still interested in his work.

TELEVISION: conspicuous consumption and kitchen sink drama

The flavour of the big apple

AS YULETIDE chaos rises around our ears, the war of nutrition between TV celebrity-chefs is reaching explosive temperatures. Gary Rhodes, the Sid Vicious of domestic science, made a pre-Christmas trip to New York not to die of an overdose in the Chelsea hotel, but to throw a little Big Apple lustre on traditional Christmas fodder (Rhodes Around Christmas, BBC2).

Gary seemed to be having a pretty good time. He sampled a so-called "Perfect Manhattan" cocktail in the Rainbow Rooms bar 65 floors up, and wheedled the house cheesecake recipe out of Junior's of Brooklyn (mostly eggs, cream and sugar, though it's hard to believe they told Gary the whole story).

At presumably incalculable cost, the BBC had acquired a highly desirable loft space, kitted out with sleek designer utensils, in which Rhodes could cavort.

In fact it gave him too much space, feeding his unfortunate habit of prancing across the parquet while semaphoring wildly in the direction of the camera, as his baggy black and white checked trousers fluttered comically. Foodwise, however, Rhodes has a gift for making exotic dishes look simple, or perhaps it's just a case of making you see that it's shrewd choice of ingredients that makes food interesting rather than struggling with recipes of pointless complexity.

His turkey saltimbocca with pearl barley in a creamy mustard dressing looked luscious enough to get you licking the screen. His mince doughnuts with rum custard were reason enough to curl up in a ball and writhe on the carpet. The latter creation had clearly impressed the chef himself. "Talk to me about *that*," he gasped, as it basked exquisitely on the plate.

You'll never be a telly-chef without a helium-filled ego and an addiction to the sound of your own voice, and Ainsley Harriott scores maximum points on both counts. Can't Cook Won't Cook (BBC1) is one of the top treats of daytime TV, as Ainsley drags in a couple of bemused human guineapigs and browbeats them into having a bash at some thoroughly improbable dish.

Slow learners are hit with a gale of insults and bellowed rebukes, as if Lenny Henry's culino-Nazi, Gareth Blackstock, had been turned loose on the general public. Ainsley cooks his own specimen perfectly, then, with enormous satisfaction, ridicules the efforts of his guests. But he really has a heart of gold . . . probably.

For his last session before the outbreak of festivities, Ainsley roped in Nigel (watched critically by wife Jo), and Joanne (encouraged, fruitlessly, by her pal Kathy). He got them to make a "poultry and port Christmas cracker", an ingenious lash-up of seasonal leftovers in filo pastry, accompanied by a sauce of Stilton cheese in double cream plus sprouts glazed in butter. If Joanne's burnt butter and Nigel's cast-iron sprouts didn't kill you, the fatal levels of cholesterol would have you wheeled out by paramedics. Encore!

Coogan's Run (BBC2) ended with The Curator, a dank little tale about Tim Fleck, curator of the pathetic Little Ottic museum (featuring "not one but three medieval wool forks" among assorted pieces of junk of questionable provenance). This one was directed and mostly written by Patrick Marber, and it displayed identifiable Marberesque characteristics — you were never quite certain whether to laugh, cry or throw things at the characters. Coogan deserves credit for creating a series where you learn more about the characters and the location as the stories cross-refer week by week. The difficult bit is spotting where acute observation ends, and making patronising generalisations about stereotyped weirdos begins.

Tim Fleck, emotionally stunted, diffident and afflicted with catastrophic ginger hair, wasn't so much a character as a punchbag, too useless to make you care either way about him. The piece was lifted by a typically astute cameo from Alison Steadman and the joke-happy ending worked because it obliterated all shades of grey in a welter of slapstick.

Adam Sweeting

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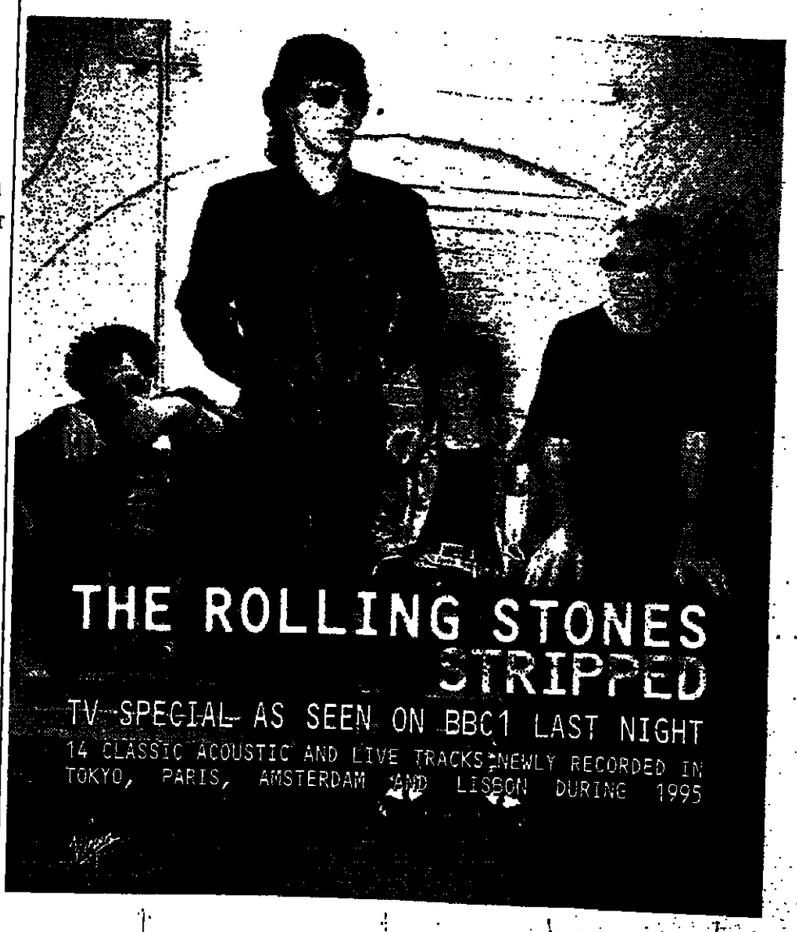


هكذا من الاصل

صكذا من الاصل

Lost in the forest . . . rejection of plans for Cardiff's new opera house (inset) might have boosted the chances of the rival project to revamp the home of Welsh rugby, Cardiff Arms Park

PHOTOGRAPHS CLIVE BARDA and MIKE BRETT

DEYAN SUDJIC attacks the Millennium Commission's rejection of the Cardiff Opera House plan and (below) TOM SUTCLIFFE explains what it means for Welsh Opera

The best idea is kicked into touch

WHO really killed the Cardiff Opera House? Was it, as Virginia Bottomley claims with the deadpan seriousness of a Buster Keaton, the Millennium Commission's sober and anonymous financial and technical advisers, who took their slide rules to the proposal and found it technically wanting?

Was it the hostility of individual millennium commissioners to the challenging architecture of the opera house, designed by Zaha Hadid, one of the most gifted, but underemployed, architects in Britain?

Or was it the "cash for toffs" reaction of the tabloids to the previous commitment of lottery money to opera, in the shape of the expensive refurbishment of the Royal Opera House in Covent Garden?

Bottomley talks airily of there being "too many uncertainties about Cardiff". And the Millennium Commission's employees drop dark hints about having no wish to fund a Welsh version of the British Library, an endless building project with constant cost escalation. It's impossible to take them seriously. Of the seven consultants employed by the commission to look at the opera house, five gave it a clean bill of health.

Rejection of the scheme boosted the hopes of supporters of the city's rival project — a re-vamp of Cardiff Arms Park to provide a 75,000-seat super stadium in time to host the 1999 Rugby World Cup.

Looking at previous decisions by the commission — which have included committing more than £40 million to an eco-theme park on the site of a derelict coalmine in Yorkshire, an undertaking that would need the marketing clout of a Disney to succeed, and yet which is currently run by a handful of enthusiasts from a Portakabin — the suggestion that the opera house, with four solid years of preparatory work under its belt, a proven opera company up and running for 40 years, and the prestige of all the most significant organisations in the Welsh capital riding on the project's success, gives Bottomley's claims of technical doubts a surrealistic quality.

As far as Zaha Hadid's design is concerned, it is true that there are persistent reports of the antipathy of at least one of the more influential commissioners, Simon Jenkins, to Hadid's work. Jenkins, the only commissioner capable of reading an architectural plan, has a predilection for Victoriana and post-modernism. The Times, the newspaper which he used to edit, and for which he still writes a column, printed a highly critical profile of Hadid earlier this year, claiming that she was the most unpopular architect in Britain. It was enough to set the more paranoid of architectural observers on the trail of a conspiracy theory. But although there are hints of a fogeyish plot against Cardiff — for example, Royal fine art commissioner Giles Worsley, editor of the Prince of Wales's magazine Perspectives, has described the scheme as a con-trick foisted on a hapless city by smooth-talking metropolitan phonies, much to the fury of Cardiff itself, which reckons to be perfectly up to the task of detecting bullshit — it's scarcely believable that Jenkins would nurture the sheer spite to scrap the project simply from aesthetic prejudice. And it is even less likely that Bottomley would have let him. She hosted a private dinner for a dozen architects last week that brought together every shade of opinion from Terry Farrell to Richard Rogers. The one issue they all agreed on was that she should back Hadid's design to the hilt.

If the architecture is disposed of, that leaves the Government's fear of the reaction from the Sun to another round of lottery cash being used to fund culture for the toffs, as the only convincing explanation for the commission's decision. Given the circumstances, it's hard not to believe that somebody somewhere has taken a calculated decision that the political risks of backing an opera house in Cardiff outweigh those of not backing it. Opera in Cardiff, a city in which it has far more of a genuinely populist following than anywhere else in Britain, has, it seems, been sacrificed because of the fiasco over the Churchill Papers and the failure of nerve over Covent Garden.

And yet, perhaps that political calculation has missed its mark. Until now the only passions raised by the expenditure of lottery money has been based on reactions against where the money is going. The Cardiff decision has provoked a genuine outcry about where it is not going. Perhaps the commission believed that by pouring vast sums into wild flowers and coastal paths they would head off criticism about assassinating the Cardiff project. As a strategy, it has been a transparent failure.

It would be, as Lord Crickhowell, the outraged chairman of the Opera House Trust says, "an outrageous decision". But sadly it is one which is only to be expected from the commission, a body which has lurched rudderless and without any sense of coherence from one arbitrary and inconsistent decision to the next. But then perhaps nothing else would have been possible given the bureaucratic machinery and its context. There was from the outset something outlandishly un-British about the idea of celebrating the millennium with a series of landmark projects. Yet somehow John Major, egged on by Peter Palumbo and others, swallowed his natural scepticism and said: "Yes, let us celebrate the millennium by building a few things that we can all feel good about". But then, as if to compensate for this untypical burst of vision, the commission has quickly been transformed into the most British of organisations, characterised by muddle, incoherence and uncertainty, when the point of the exercise is the pursuit of boldness and decision.

Setting on one side all the unanswerable questions that hang over the rest of the lottery-funded building boom, with all the entirely separate cash being deployed by arts, sports, charity and Heritage funds, the millennium itself is of course faced by the ominous shadow of an entirely unanswerable question of definition. What constitutes an adequate and appropriate form of celebrating the millennium?

The event has to mean the big, the unexpected and the out-of-the-ordinary. What, then, does the commission think it is doing by telling us that village halls in Ingleton, Moulsoe and Sully are authentically worth celebrating by the entire nation as once-in-1,000-year events? Does anyone really believe that, desirable though it may be, the construction of £46 million-worth of cycle paths is a millennial project, an event comparable with the Domesday Book or the building of Durham Cathedral? Even on the most cynical level, they are certainly not going to provide the kind of photo opportunities that the Government would have wished for. And the plans for kitsch water jets in Portsmouth harbour, or for £21 million-worth of seeds for Kew Gardens, won't do it either. There is the fatal wish of the worthy but dull about all of these ideas.

What Cardiff offered above all the other projects is that it genuinely had the feel of a workable project for the millennium, apparently more than enough to condemn it. Let's look at what we have lost with Cardiff's derailment. The Opera House would first and foremost have been a genuine national institution for Wales, home not just for an internationally respected opera company, but also the most popular venue in Wales for a range of other musical events, from Phantom of the Opera to pantomime. It would have played a hugely important part in revitalising Cardiff's derelict docks, helping to bring an entire city to life with new investment, new jobs and a new sense of purpose. And it would also have been one of the most significant pieces of new architecture to be built in Britain for a decade. Hadid's design took the architectural debate in Britain forward by several stages. It had nothing to do with the arid stylistic argument between hi-tech and nostalgia. It wasn't a provincial copy of somebody else's idea. Rather it was a genuinely innovative and beautiful piece of architecture that answered the complex requirements of the brief for the international competition in which Hadid triumphed.

She achieved the daunting task of creating a building that had both the sense of presence that such a significant cultural institution as an opera house must have, but which also addressed itself to the idea of the fabric of the city that is taking shape around it. She designed a building of forceful beauty as well as a public space animated by architecture and the water of Cardiff Bay beyond.

Hadid, despite the misleading impression of an architectural diva that those who criticise her seek to foist upon her, has reacted to the blow with circumspection. "They say it is too big, too big for what? You can't design an opera house for a toy town. For just a very little amount of money, we have sacrificed the chance of following the project through."

The truth is that this is a tragedy, not least because the decision on Cardiff shows just how little sense of vision that a well-intentioned attempt by Britain to look ahead, to act positively, turns out to have in reality. Let us hope that it is not too late to rescue something from the wreck of Cardiff Bay.

It's people that count, not builings

A FEW years ago there was much talk about the Welsh National Opera having achieved "international" status. The famous German director Peter Stein (from the Berlin Schaubühne) was brought back to staging opera by the WNO's then boss, Brian McMaster, with Otello, Falstaff and Pelleas and Melisande. The productions travelled to New York, Brussels, and on to television.

This was all achieved by a sparsely subsidised touring opera company without a home of its own, playing three short seasons in Cardiff but inevitably deriving more of its work and raison d'être from the English regions, especially Birmingham.

But now the magic of WNO seems to have worn off — along with the liveliness and confidence that used to mark Britain's other "national" opera companies (Scottish Opera and ENO).

The Peter Stein/Pierre Boulez production of Schoenberg's Moses and Aaron — a dream dating back to the McMaster years in Cardiff — was actually snaffled by the Netherlands Opera in Amsterdam.

So does Cardiff deserve or need a spanking new opera house seating far more punters than it had ever before attracted? Was this ever the right project, with all the expense and grandeur for WNO of functioning on a much larger scale?

Government paymasters have forced it to cut back on future adventurous plans. That was why the New York talent scout Matthew Epstein, McMaster's successor, quit prematurely. There was no money for the dreams he'd been hired to make real. It makes no sense to spend millions on a prestige edifice if the money's not there to run a touring company decently. Anyway, many architectural wonders (Sydney and the Bastille in Paris) have proved lamentable theatres in practical terms.

Mr Major's government is gradually turning off the tap of subsidy which has given Britain a rare operatic distinction in the last 50 years. The responsibility, with its steady drip of revenue funding, goes against their ideology. A Welsh opera house would have argued against a cheap Scottish solution like sacking the orchestra. Why allow opera performers and ancillaries a tenure that jars with today's Stagecoach ethos? The WNO company is living in a warehouse not a theatre. But it built its international repute (such as it was) under those circumstances.

Even the Royal Opera, comfortably assured about the reconstruction of its home base, is far from certain where the cash is coming from over the next few years to maintain a credible artistic life with a sufficient number of new productions. It is in the best position to cream off private sponsorship. Yet just one day ago it announced the cancellation of yet another of this current season's new productions: Il Corsaro, the early Verdi rarity which was to be a jewel of next summer's Verdi festival.

The bottom line is WNO's work as a performing institution. Scottish Opera has found the Glasgow Theatre Royal a mixed blessing: a home base for a touring company can be a distorting factor in planning how long to stay off the road. Perhaps WNO should keep its head down, and stay alive. The companies exist to perform. Where they work, and how they are housed, are secondary questions. What matters most is the imagination they show. In essence an opera company is people, not a building.

'Last night I dreamt I went to Manderley again'

But when VERA RULE got to Rebecca's house it had changed utterly. And, she wonders, what might become of other famous literary properties should they fall into the wrong hands?

Illustrations by ANDRZEJ KRAUZE

IN Alan Bennett's play adaptation of *The Wind In The Willows*, when Toad Hall is taken over by weasels, "taken over" has a contemporary meaning. The weasels are planning visitor throughput, souvenir shops, a marina and very possibly a Toad Hall theme park. Now consider the fates of:

● *Coketown*, Dickens's mid-Victorian cotton-boom borough, which went through 20 years of extreme decay after Bounderby Mills closed (they are now cable-TV studios). But in 1993, the regional authority successfully applied to Brussels for millions in EU grants for revivifying inner urban areas, and spent some of these, to tabloid shock-horror, on gutting warehouses to create a cheap hireable multi-media workshops.

● The Prince of Wales recently made "social investments" in the new development (beyond the edge-of-town Tesco and MFI) at *Casterbridge*, built to "combine vernacular Wessex architecture with the enclosure patterns of Tuscan hill towns".

● The great country house, *Brideshead*, mouldered until the seventies when it was converted into a recording studio, conveniently within chaffeured distance of the rockocracy. It is now a training school for bodyguards, with a skidpan in the grounds for the defensive driving course. The castle of *Torquilstone*, (where Ivanhoe once took refuge), is now administered by English Heritage and open only as a secure international conference facility; the helicopter pad in the courtyard can be used after the drawbridge has been raised.

● Readers of *Hello!* recently enjoyed a photo-spread on the new Jacuzzi and sauna suite added to the master bath/bedroom at *Howard's End* by the daytime TV confession-show presenter who bought the place "for its wonderful nostalgia value".

● Barns and stables at *Manderley* not destroyed during the fire were, in the fifties, accommodation for an advanced (and notoriously druggy) fee-paying co-ed school; but 10 years ago, a Pacific Rim evangelic sect bought the estate and fenced it off. There is a new, if concrete, mansion, and a 30-foot neon cross on the nearby beach.

● *Mansfield Park* was in the fasting-on-lemon-juice and hot-water-and-colonic-irrigation business until last year, when its owners decided that their future was in remedial therapy for bulimia and anorexia. *Lockslеy Hall* is now a health club and water sports centre, so successful that prospective competitors for *Gladiators* are sent there to beef up. The Barsetshire Regional Health Trust has taken over *Hiram's Hospital*, Barchester, as headquarters for its private finance subsidiary.

● The current tenants of *Wildfell Hall* had a poor start to their mail-order catalogue for sex aids and lingerie, but going online with a home page has increased turnover. *Nightmare Abbey* did murder mystery weekends with bed-and-breakfast until the fad passed, and now takes orders for commemorative porcelain plates through coupons in the more revoltingly sentimental Sunday colour mags. *Dorlcote Mill on the Floss* sold "stoneground hand-stirred Christmas puddings" through Cranks, but the National Trust's saturation pud output meant a change to marketing aromatherapy oils by post. *Dingley Dell* is, of course, as a restaurant only a little less famous than Le Manoir aux Quat' Saisons, though its chef (a Parisian maniac) despises local produce, except for the riskier sorts of wild fungi, and imports every ingredient directly from France daily on the Eurostar.

● A planning objection was initially lodged to wind-farm vanes being installed at *Wuthering Heights*, but the post-privatisation electricity suppliers claim that without many more alternative power sources the region will have to go nuclear, so the campaign concluded. Only one investigative reporter on the *Guardian's* environment pages noticed the new agribusiness at *Cold Comfort Farm* — pig-breeding in laboratory conditions to produce bio-engineered heart and skin transplant material.

● The *Hundred Acre Wood* was taken over by a firm organising paint-gun games for City futures-sellers, while a bungee-jumping crane was erected over Eeyore's boggy place. Both enterprises failed.

● The *Tabard Inn* in Southwark has been relaunched in turn as the Pilgrims' Wine Bar, the Compostella Tapas Bar, the Parson's Port Cellars (very florid on the typography), the Man of Law's Champagne and Oyster Bar, the Clerk's Tavern with 34 beers all from Prague on draught and aggressive stand-up comics, the members-only Monk Club and is now Wifesound, a regular rave venue for the under-17s.

● Despite the protests (63 travellers were arrested), the last motorway constructed under the Government's present programme has cut through *Watership Down*.

Professor Derek Birchall

Crystal-clear brainwaves

DEREK Birchall, who has died aged 65, was one of Britain's most prolific inventors, a rebel, an iconoclast, and a leading inorganic chemist. This was despite — or perhaps because of — never having had a formal science training. Enthusiasm and the quality of his work won over many in the technological establishment initially troubled by his forays. His discourses on the shortcomings of that establishment were a delight.

After leaving school at the age of 14 he began as a laboratory assistant while taking evening classes. At 19 he registered the first of 100 patents for his inventions. At 26, he took what he described as a "proper job" with ICI's salt division and discovered how to control the crystallisation of salt to produce fluffy dendritic crystals. From this sprang Derek's interest in inorganic crystals, control of their shape and their mechanical properties.

Birchall's work on fire retardants and crystallisation came together in the invention of Monnex, a dry fire extinguisher. This came about because he knew that Mrs Beeton advised throwing salt on a kitchen fire to suppress flames prior to making toast and studied this process.

His next major ICI invention set him off in a new direction. Fibres like nylon and polyester cannot be used at high temperatures, whereas asbestos, as an inorganic fibrous material, can. Birchall's aim was to spin an inorganic fibre just as synthetic polymer fibres are spun. The result was Saffil, a fibre comprising whiskers of heat and chemical-resistant aluminium oxide, used in high temperature cements. It has been used on the underside of the space shuttle, to strengthen aluminium car engine blocks, and — most dear to his heart — as a filter material in the brewing industry to replace asbestos.

Birchall knew that the most widely used inorganic material, cement, was very brittle and often needed to be reinforced by steel rods. He deduced that microscopic holes in cement account for its poor mechanical properties. He had also learned that shells and skeletons of biological creatures provide some of the toughest, lightest inorganic materials — they use small amounts of organic polymer to regulate the growth of inorganic crystals. His research group devised a method of extruding cement incorporating a small amount of an organic polymer to eliminate holes and so create a new macro defect-free cement, which can be extruded like a plastic. Coiled tensile springs made from this material demonstrate its potential, and it has low energy cost compared with steel and plastics.

Twenty years ago Birchall became intrigued when he found that of the two most common elements in the earth's crust, silicon is apparently essential for an animal's wellbeing, whereas aluminium is toxic. He proposed that the essential role of silicon in biology is to prevent aluminium's harmful effects. Having failed to interest ICI he was invited recently to set up a research team into silicon's medical aspects at the Royal Liverpool University Hospital.

After 10 years as a research leader at ICI he was promoted to research associate and in 1975 reached the highest scientific rank of senior research associate. He retired in 1992.

Birchall held many academic posts and in 1982 was elected a fellow of the Royal Society. An OBE followed in 1990. He was extremely pleased to receive an Honorary ScD from the University of East Anglia. This seemed to repair the omission of a formal higher education in his earlier career! He twinkled with infectious joy throughout the ceremony.

When Birchall retired he was already visiting professor of clinical chemistry at the Royal Liverpool University Hospital. Then Keele University appointed him professor of inorganic chemistry and at the Centre for Inorganic Chemistry and Materials Science — created for him — he pursued his interests in material science and the biological role of silicon to his heart's content.

Birchall was run down on a Pall Mall pedestrian crossing while returning from a Royal Society meeting. We mourn his death but rejoice in his contribution to science and society across more than 40 years.

He married Pauline in 1956 and claimed that she insisted on him getting a "proper job". They were intensely proud of their sons Shaun and Tim. Pauline died just two years before he retired. More recently he was supported by Audrey, a former colleague, in making his transition from industry to academia.

Birchall . . . twinkled with joy

Andrew J Thomson
Geoffrey Allen

James Derek Birchall, inorganic chemist, born October 7, 1930; died December 7, 1995

Carl Marsden

The heartbeat of Brixton

CARL Marsden told me, "It's a long life to live 37 years in the ghetto." He never quite made it — a few weeks later his death made the Brixton paper's front page: "Carl Marsden was shot four times with a rapid-fire gun in a council estate . . . He was found slumped dead inside his red Peugeot 306 around 11pm on Friday. He had been shot from behind and the gun was left discarded on the back seat."

Carl "Briga C" Marsden, who was 36, was "the heartbeat of Brixton" said a friend. But outside the ghettos in Britain, New York, and Jamaica where he was king, few had heard of him.

Briga C was a peacemaker, with a status based on his unique personality. He was popular as a stand-up comic at Brixton's Cabarave club and there was no one, young or old, man or woman, black or white, he could not charm with his smile. He would stop fights by saying, "If the two of you go to war, I can't be friends with whoever wins." More than "community leaders", spokespeople or quango officials he was in touch with people. He liked to hang out at a Brixton minicab office, picking up gossip, recounting stories, or giving advance information on a concert.

His judgment was trusted, he was a quality guarantee — an introduction from him meant you would be trusted. He helped people get on; yet tragically this was insufficient to protect him against the rising tide of street violence.

Briga C, son of the Jamaican cyclist Rudolph Marsden, came to Britain at 15 after being sent for by his mother. She thought she could better keep him out of trouble here. Not so. He went through approved school and Borstal, only turning the corner when he discovered karate, eventually fighting for England. He was never in trouble again. His black belt got him work as a bodyguard, touring the world with Madonna, Luther Vandross, Richard Pryor and Lionel Richie. His photo album of him with the stars was his pride and joy.

Carl Marsden . . . trusted king of the ghettos

The Sunday before his death he was at a Buju Banton gig overseeing operations, greeting people, eyes darting, an immaculate figure in his designer black leather jacket. He was always the best dressed man on the block.

Briga C provided liaison and security on a documentary film shooting on a tough west London estate. When some local badmen were about to seize the camera he saved it — and the crew — from a beating. "They're with me," was all he needed to say.

Like many others Carl Marsden had the ambition and the talent to get out of the ghetto. If he had asked for more, rather than waiting for it to be given to him, he might have made it. He craved the respect and recognition he gave to others. This was not just for himself, but for the humour, creativity and style of the street — his life blood and his death.

Wesley Greene

Carl Marsden, bodyguard, born December 28, 1958; died December 8, 1995

Leslie Wilkinson

A truly comic character

LESLIE Wilkinson, who has died aged 87, was one of the anonymous army who worked a full lifetime of laughter for the delight of millions of children. Unknown outside the once-famous confines of Fleetway House in London's Farringdon Street, thanks to the Amalgamated Press's policy of strict anonymity, he scripted strips, wrote stories and eventually edited a number of their comics from the juvenile Puck to the teenage girls' weekly Valentine, via perhaps the best remembered comics of the golden age of children's publishing, Radio Fun and Film Fun.

Leslie was born into comics: his father, Ernest, was a Victorian cartoonist whose distinctive style appeared in turn of the century weeklies and included such characters as The Pink Kid in The Comic Home Journal (1900). Leslie remembered his father drawing cartoons for John Bull, the paper started by Horatio Bottomley.

However Ernest's style was growing old-fashioned, and he opened a grocery shop in Streatham, south London, where young Leslie went to school before becoming an office boy. After a year he was taken on as a junior at the Amalgamated Press, thanks to the director of comics, Harold Garrish, who had a penchant for making room for his contributors' sons. Leslie would stay with the "fun factory" for the rest of his working life.

Wilkinson began in the nursery department under Bill Fisher, supervising editor of the three most successful coloured comics then published, Rainbow — the only comic known to be delivered to Buckingham Palace — Tiger Tim's Weekly, and Playbox. These were famous for the brilliant H S Foxwell's funny animals, Tiger Tim and the Bruin Boys, and that group's set of twin sisters, Tiger Tilly and the Hippo Girls.

He then moved to Puck, the company's first (1904) coloured comic. "It was run by two very dull people, and I didn't enjoy that." Garrish's next idea was to elevate two of the company's oldest penny comics, Butterfly, which he started in 1904 as a misguided attempt to interest young ladies, and Merry-And-Bright, a 1910 weekly whose finest hour had come during the Great War when music hall stars, including Harry Tate and Nellie Wallace, had been introduced in strip cartoons.

Garrish brought in Leonard Stroud as editor and raised the appeal from working to middle-class, introducing a front page about Augustus Topping, handyman at a mixed boarding school, impeccably drawn in semi-serious style by the leading 1930s cartoonist, Roy Wilson.

Another scheme from Garrish was launched in 1938. Five comics were to be run by 12 writers divided into three sets of four, one creating the comic strips, another working on the picture serials, and the third writing the fiction pages. These groups never met, but as Garrish explained to Wilkinson, "It's like a factory, you know: three groups of four specialists conducted by one boss."

Not caring for this system Wilkinson moved to the tuppenny comic Crackers, and devised Buster Button, a Billy Bunter-style fat boy, and Reggie Raft — He's Not So Daft, both drawn by Louis Diamond, a provincial mini-tycoon who had sold out his Target Comics to the AP in return for a drawing job. Before being called up into the army in 1940, Wilkinson worked on Radio Fun, which rocketed to success with popular radio stars such as Big-Hearted Arthur Askey and the Crazy Gang's Flanagan and Allen.

AFTER the war Wilkinson was "Eddie the happy editor" at Film Fun. His hobby had been cinema since the silent days, and he adapted films — such as Yankie Buccaneer, drawn by C Montford — into picture serials. For 10 years he introduced strips starring such comedians as Sid Field, Ronald Shiner, Frankie Howerd and Tommy Cooper.

Then Garrish died and the comic empire was taken over by Percival Haydon. He put Wilkinson on to the monthly Sexton Blake Library series. Less than happy with detective dramatics, "Wilkie" as he was called by one and all, was asked by Haydon for his opinion on the dummy of a new picture paper designed for teenage girls. Honest as always, Wilkie said he found the stories charming. Haydon promptly moved Wilkie to the new comic, Valentine, where he remained on the editorial and scriptwriting side for 12 years, until his retirement in 1969.

Wilkinson was a long-standing amateur actor and spent much of his retirement entertaining senior citizens' clubs with old time music hall songs. Confined to a wheelchair in his later life, he was a familiar sight at the National Film Theatre, where he saw Country Life, Michael Blakemore's Australian variation on Uncle Vanya, the day before he died.

He never married.

Valentine . . . Wilkinson's last weekly love affair

Denis Gifford

Leslie Wilkinson, journalist, born August 4, 1908; died December 6, 1995

Another Day

December 23, 1968: The children went off to the pantomime and I did my Christmas shopping, looking after presents for Peter Smithson, my new driver, Janet and Anne. At 4.30 I went along to Downing Street and found Harold [Wilson] in his study, comfortable and easy, a little careful with me . . . I said I was rather remote now, something that had been brought home to me on Thursday when Gerald Gardiner had said that he had to go off to No. 10 for talks about the Donovan Report and assumed that I was coming too. I must say I had expected to be on the inner group which decided that . . .

He was watching me, realising that I was accepting my position outside the charmed circle . . . Fred Peart has fully taken my place and Harold is delighted to have him there because although Fred hasn't any great intelligence he has a kind of shrewdness. Harold praised him highly. I said, "Yes, Fred Peart is in our Labour Cabinet what the Duke of Omnium is in a Trollope Cabinet, a man of natural breeding, nobility and decency who speaks with a kind of commonsensical wisdom." We talked rather guardedly about Roy [Jenkins] and the difficulties of the Treasury.

The Crossman Diaries.
Hamish Hamilton/Cape, 1979.

Death Notices

DUNCAN. Frances Rose, typographer, graphic designer, teacher of textile arts, mother, daughter, sister, wife and friend at the age of 52 died peacefully on 10 December 1995 from complication following a liver transplant. A celebration of her life is planned for the spring.

HULL, Cecil Browne, formerly of County Down, peacefully at home in Hawkenbury, Tunbridge Wells, on 21st December. Sadly missed by his wife Rosemary and children, Anthony, Karen and Sheenagh. Family flowers or donations to Oxfam, or Hospice in the Weald.

LING. Arthur George, architect and town planner 20th December 1995 aged 82. Funeral ceremony to be held on the 29th December at 2pm at the Oakleywood Crematorium, Bishop's, Tachbrook near Leamington Spa. Family flowers only and donations to Horton General Hospital, Banbury.

MONTAGUE. John Cook following his recent illness, peacefully at The Westminster Memorial Hospital, Shaftesbury on Dec.19th.. Aged 52 years. Beloved husband, father and grandfather. Funeral Service at St.Peters Church, Shaftesbury on Tuesday 2nd Jan. at 2.0.p.m., followed by Cremation at Salisbury. Family flowers only. Donations for The British Red Cross may be sent to Merefield 4, Henebridge F/D., Melbury Abbas, Shaftesbury, Dorset. Tel. (01747) 853532.

PENNINGTON Margaret, aged 89 years of Newent and formerly of Chesterfield on December 21st after a short illness. Private Cremation. Donations if desired for The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds or The World Wildlife Fund may be sent c/o Smiths Funeral Services, Furnace Lane, Newent, Glos. GL18 1DD

Acknowledgments

CHRISTMAS CAROLS may be just a memory but you still have Christmas Rose.

Engagements

ILIFFE-PALFREYMAN. Mr E.Iliffe is pleased to announce the engagement of his eldest daughter Carolyn Jane to David Palfreyman, younger son of Mr and Mrs A.Palfreyman. Love and congratulations.

To place your announcement telephone 0171 611 9060

Christmas Birthdays

WHAT makes you tick? That dull cliché was the title Anthony Clare (53 tomorrow), originally wanted for his radio series, In The Psychiatrist's Chair. Back when it was proposed 13 years ago, interviews mostly dealt in anecdote and narrative; and true confessions — booze, abuse and all — were novelties outside the more advanced women's pages. He intended to prove famous people vulnerable; what he usually discovers, through those swift questions which nip into the suspense of the silences, is that they want to justify or sell themselves, or self-indulge.

And what do we know about Dr Clare's ticking? That his parents educated him, by precept, in disengagement and distance; that Jesuit fathers taught him doubt; that he is frightened of going to the dentist; that when the death of his best man pushed him to the front of life's bus queue he was suddenly aware that "life is to be lived"; that he admits he "is not a nice man at all"; that "the self is elusive". VR

Today's birthdays: Emperor Akihito of Japan, 62; Lord Bancroft, former head of the Home Civil Service, 73; Lord Blake, historian, 79; Maurice Denham, actor, 86; John Guinness, chairman, British Nuclear Fuels, 60; Yousuf Karsh, portrait photographer, 87; Graham Kelly, chief executive, the Football Association, 50; Christopher Lawrence, silversmith, 59; Judy Leden, world paragliding champion, 36; Sir Roger Neville, chief executive, Sun Alliance, 64; Joan Quennell, former MP, 72; Ashley Raeburn, former chairman, Boosey and Hawkes, 77; Helmut Schmidt, former Chancellor, West Germany, 77; Queen Silvia of Sweden, 52; Rayner Unwin, publisher 69.

Tomorrow's other birthdays: Mair Barnes, chairman, Oceanhaven, 51; Colin Cowdrey, cricketer, 63; Dame Joan Kelleher, former director, WRAC, 80; Sir Ivan Lawrence, QC, Conservative MP, 59; Suzy Menkes, fashion editor, 52; Jenny May, photographer, 51; Thea Porter, fashion designer, 68; Norman Rossington, actor, 67; Carol Vorderman, broadcaster, 35; Philip Ziegler, biographer, 66.

Christmas Day birthdays: Princess Alexandra, 59; Princess Alice, 94; Lord Annan, educationalist, 79; Sheila Browne, former principal, Newnham College, Cambridge, 71; Prof Kenneth Calman, chief medical officer, Department of Health, 54; Geula Cohen, militant Israeli politician, 68; Quentin Crisp, gay writer and humorist, 87; Barbara Follett, founder of Emily's List, 51; Prof Christopher Frayling, cultural historian, 48; Lord Grade, entertainments mogul, 89; Stuart Hall, broadcaster, 61; The Rt Rev Noel Jones, Bishop of Sodor and Man, 63; Annie Lennox, singer, 41; Prof Philip Love, vice-chancellor, Liverpool University, 56; Gary McAllister, footballer, 31; Shane McGowan, rock singer, 37; Ismail Merchant, film producer, 59; Phyllida Parsloe, professor of social work, Bristol University, 65; Eve Pollard, journalist and broadcaster, 50; Noel Redding, rock musician, 50; Lord Sheppard, chairman and chief executive, Grand Metropolitan, 63; Sissy Spacek, actress, 46; Phil Spector, record producer, 55; Hilary Spurling, biographer and critic, 55; Nigel Starmer-Smith, sports commentator, 51; Sir Noel Stockdale, life president, Asda Group, 75; Sir Christopher Wates, chairman, Wates Holdings, 56.

Face to Faith

Why Jesus is fact, not fiction

Piers Paul Read

THERE are in the world around a billion people who believe that Jesus Christ was the Son of God. Their knowledge of Jesus comes from the Gospels but never before has the link between their faith and these ancient texts been so confusing.

On the one hand, there are the fundamentalists who believe that everything described in the Bible must be literally true; on the other, there is an ever growing band of specialists and exegetes who place the veracity of scripture in doubt.

This has led some Christians to lose their faith. Unwilling on the one hand to accept the crude literalism of the fundamentalists, and unable to understand the complex controversies of the professional exegetes on the other, the baffled believer comes to accept that there is a scholarly consensus that Jesus was not the man, let alone the God, that he or she had hitherto thought he was.

There is no reliable source for information about Jesus outside the letters and narratives in the New Testament. By and large we can only know Jesus through the words of the Evangelists who believed him to be the Son of God. If their tendentiousness makes the Gospels worthless as history, and if a strictly scientific investigation reduces Jesus to a figure about whom little or nothing can be known, what kind of man emerges if we read the Gospels as if they were fiction? What if we approach the character of Jesus of Nazareth as we would Casaubon in Middlemarch or Pierre in War And Peace?

I would start with the Gospel of St Luke. He sets off at a fast pace, and tells a good story with some charming vignettes. The young Jesus is portrayed as somewhat surly: at the age of 12 after a visit to Jerusalem, he stays behind "without his parents knowing it", obliging them to return after a day's journey to find him talking to doctors in the Temple. When his mother gently rebukes him, he answers abruptly, almost rudely, in tones familiar to any parent of an adolescent son: "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be busy with my Father's affairs?"

He is also somewhat abrupt when at the wedding at Cana Mary points out that their hosts have run out of wine. "Woman, why turn to me? My hour has not come." Yet he rises above his own objection and turns jars of water into wine.

Women were fond of Jesus and Jesus appears to have been fond of them. He was more lenient towards women's weaknesses than he was towards those of men, permitting the "woman who had a bad name" to wash his feet in her tears and saving the woman accused of adultery from death by stoning.

Despite St Paul's assurance that "he was a man like us" and the speculation in The Last Temptation Of Christ, there is no suggestion in any of the Gospels that Jesus himself was subject to sexual temptations, not even when he was tested by Satan in the wilderness. There is no description of his physical appearance. He was frequently stern but also kind: most of his miracles suggest compassion for the distressed and the diseased, although some were to solve temporary catering problems (Cana, the feeding of the 5,000), and others to astonish his disciples (walking on the water, catching fish). It is not the role as a miracle-worker that makes him challenging as a character in fiction. Rather it is his extraordinary air of authority. He seems utterly sure of the ideas he puts forward even though they are met with incredulity by his contemporaries quite as much as they are by sceptics today. Little by little, he gets across that he is not a mere prophet but the Son of God. When he says it too clearly, some in the audience try to stone him. When he goes on to say that his flesh is real food and his blood real drink, and that only those who eat this flesh and drink this blood will live for ever, "many of his followers said, 'This is intolerable language. How could anyone accept it?' "

How indeed. Yet, as GK Chesterton recognised, it is precisely this insistence that he was the Son of God that makes Jesus unique both in history and fiction. Normally speaking, the greater a man is, the less likely he is to make the very greatest claim. Here we reach the point where an approach to Jesus as a character in fiction reaches its limits. For what team of colluding authors could invent a character so contradictory and yet so convincing? One who could calm the winds and the seas, yet permitted himself to be scourged and crucified?

If the Gospels were fiction, said Jean-Jacques Rousseau, then the authors would be more extraordinary than their hero. The only hypothesis that satisfactorily explains this paradox to me is that the substance of the story told by the Evangelists is true.

Piers Paul Read is a novelist.

Doonesbury

BY GARRY TRUDEAU

هكذا من الاصل

صكذا من الاصل

Money Guardian

How to take Santa's grotto present back

Jill Papworth

WOMEN spend far more time than men in searching for that special present for their partner. While some women take more than four hours trying to find a gift, most men take less than an hour.

Research compiled for Access, the credit card organisation, into Christmas shopping habits, also shows that however long they spend looking, few men or women really know what their partner wants for Christmas. Those who do may still find they have bought faulty goods for their partner or relative.

Most large retailers will come to the rescue and exchange unwanted gifts and in some cases offer cash refunds. While you have no legal right to a refund if you return an item simply because you do not like it, or if it turns out to be the wrong size, stores such as Marks & Spencer will still agree to give you a refund, exchange or credit note out of goodwill. So it is always worth asking.

If the Christmas presents you bought turn out faulty you will need to to get clued up on your shopper's rights.

The first fact to arm yourself with is that, in most cases, if you return faulty goods as quickly as possible to the retailer you bought them from, you are entitled to a full refund. The second is that you have exactly the same rights whether you bought items at their full price before Christmas or at a cut-price in the post-Christmas sales.

By law, anything a shop sells you must match certain legal standards of satisfaction, regardless of whether goods are very cheap, labelled as a sale item or even second-hand.

Goods must be of "satisfactory quality" which means safe, durable, working properly and free from defects, even minor ones, except where faults have been brought to your attention by the seller. You cannot complain about an item being dirty if it was labelled "shop soiled", for example.

Purchases must be "fit for their purpose", including any particular purpose you make known to the seller. If, say, you ask for waterproof boots fit for walking in slush and snow, you should not end up with wet socks.

Goods must be "as described" on the packaging, labels, display signs or by a shop assistant. A wallet described as leather should not turn out to be plastic and a jumper labelled 100 per cent wool should be just that. These basic statutory rights cover all goods bought or hired from a trader, whether a shop, street market, catalogue or doorstep seller.

If goods do turn out faulty and you want to claim your right to a refund, you should tell the seller as soon as possible. Although the law gives you a reasonable time to examine goods you've bought to make sure they are satisfactory, this period is not fixed. If you do keep them for too long without complaining, you lose your right to a refund.

When goods are faulty, it is the retailer's legal responsibility to put things right, not the manufacturer's.

While it's best to have some proof of purchase when you return goods, your statutory rights are not affected if you have lost your receipt. A credit card voucher, cheque stub or price tag should serve as well.

A refund is your right and you do not have to accept the offer of a replacement, credit note or free repair instead. If you do accept a credit note and then can't find anything else you want to spend it on, you are unlikely to be able to exchange it for cash later on.

Notices displayed in shops or on sales receipts saying: "no refunds on sale goods" are illegal and should be reported to your local trading standards department, which can take action against the retailer.

Because by law it is the buyer of goods who has a contract with the seller, retailers are not obliged to do anything if faulty goods are returned by a third party, such as someone who has received them as a Christmas present. In practice, some stores will agree to deal with a complaint about a present. If genuinely faulty goods are returned to Marks & Spencer with or without a receipt, for example, the store will give a full refund regardless of who takes them back.

On top of claiming a refund because an item is faulty, you may also be able to claim compensation if you suffer a loss because of the fault. If, for example, clothes are damaged by a faulty iron, you should try claiming their replacement value.

You get extra protection if you pay for more expensive goods by credit card. Under the Consumer Credit Act, if a retailer refuses to pay up when you return faulty goods, you can claim a refund from the credit card company providing they cost £100 or more. But this is only the case if you use a credit card, rather than a debit or charge card.

If you return goods and fail to get satisfaction from the retailer, put your complaint in writing to the shop's head office, address it to customer services or the chairman and enclose a photocopy of your proof of purchase. Always keep copies of correspondence and relevant documents.

To avoid falling foul of attempts by retailers to withdraw your rights after a certain period if a complaint takes a long time to resolve, Ashley Holmes — head of legal affairs at the Consumers' Association — advises complainants to include in all letters, "the magic formula: 'I am reserving my rights' ".

Your final recourse if you get no joy from the company is to take them to your local small claims court where, from January 8, you can sue for sums of up to £3,000. The procedure is relatively straightforward. You can initiate an action simply by visiting your County Court, filling in a default summons form N1 and paying a fee of 1 per cent of any sum claimed up to £600 and a flat fee of £65 for sums between £601 and £3,000. This is often sufficient on its own to get the company to cough up.

For a list of free publications on your consumer rights or to order copies, call the Office of Fair Trading on 0181-398 3405.

Beware of sales price cuts which are not all they seem

WHEN chasing bargains in the post-Christmas sales it pays to keep a wary eye out for price cuts that are not be all they seem.

It is a criminal offence for retailers to mislead customers about price reductions. For example, a label on a washing machine saying: "was £350, now only £260" is misleading if the machine was never on sale at the higher price. Retailers are also supposed to abide by a voluntary industry code of practice on how they price goods and services. So, where a line of cheap goods has been bought in specially the shop should make this clear by marking them "special purchase".

But because the code is not statutory, there is room for confusion. For example, it is worth looking out for signs such as "manufacturer's recommended retail price £299. Our price £249" which can exaggerate the manufacturer's price to make your saving look bigger. It is wisest to compare selling prices with those of other retailers.

Drink drivers can still run for cheap cover

IAN WYLIE finds that insurance companies are surprisingly lenient

REPORTS from police forces around the country this week show that the Christmas anti-drink drive campaign is cutting the number of motorists failing the breath test.

The prospect of crippling insurance premiums following conviction is a further deterrent, but a surprising number of motor insurers still adopt a lenient attitude towards drink drivers. One in five insurance companies now refuses cover to any motorist with a drink-drive conviction, according to a study published earlier this month by the Portman Group, which campaigns against alcohol abuse.

But the report's claim that the remaining insurers will treble premiums for convicted drink drivers is simply not true, according to insurance intermediary Motor Advice.

A trawl through premiums being charged last week indicates that some insurers will increase the annual premium of a convicted drink driver by as little as £10. Other insurers will double premiums, but few, if any, will treble them.

For example, a 22-year-old male living in Exeter and driving a Lada Samara with a clean licence and four years no-claims bonus would expect to pay £252 for comprehensive insurance from Sun Alliance. However, the addition of a "DR10" to his licence — which indicates a conviction for drink driving — would raise his premium by more than 100 per cent to £514.

In contrast, London & Edinburgh adopts a much more relaxed stance. It would insure the same driver with a clean licence for £445, but raise the premium by only £10 to £455 following a drink-driving conviction. The policy excess would also increase, but only by £50 to £350.

Even greater leniency is shown to older motorists with a DR10 on their licences. A 35-year-old male living in the same place, driving the same car and with the same driving record would pay £313 to London & Edinburgh for comprehensive insurance.

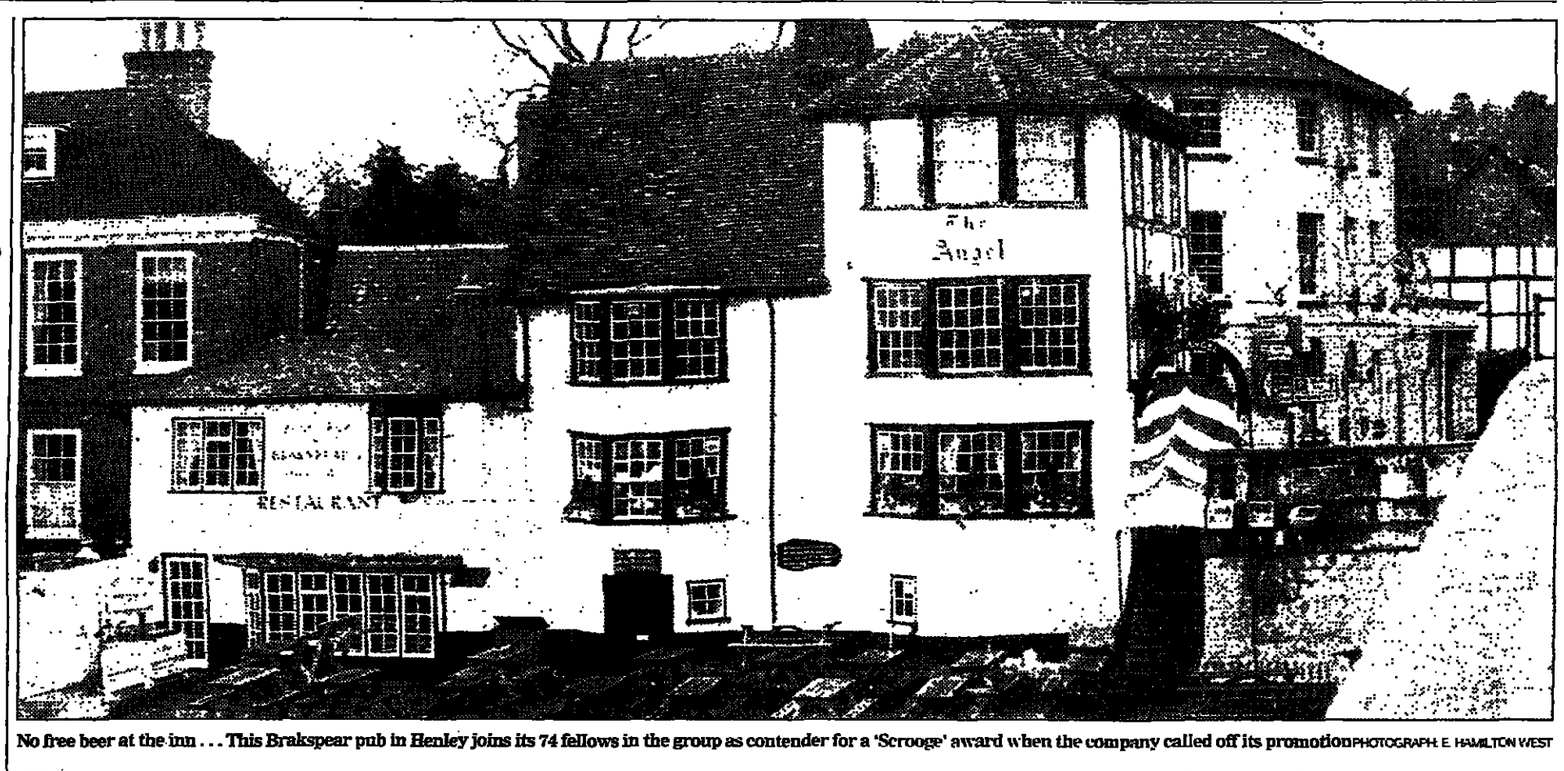
After a drink-driving conviction, the motorist would again have to accept a £50 increase in excess, this time to £150, but the premium would remain exactly the same.

Even among the insurers who take a tougher line on drink drivers, the average increase in premium for a 35-year-old is almost half that for a 22-year-old motorist.

But another survey, published this week by Privilege Insurance, confirms that older drivers are more likely to drink and drive than younger motorists.

According to the Mori poll of more than 650 motorists, 75 per cent of drivers aged between 17 and 24 claim never to drink and drive, compared with 59 per cent of motorists aged 25 and over. The poll indicates that older male drivers are the group most likely to drink and drive, while young males are no more likely to drink and drive than their female counterparts.

Money Guardian is edited by Margaret Hughes



No free beer at the inn . . . This Brakspear pub in Henley joins its 74 fellows in the group as contender for a 'Scrooge' award when the company called off its promotion PHOTOGRAPH: E. HAMILTON WEST

Brewer prevents customers from organising free party

Richard Colbey

CUSTOMERS who had been hoping for free beer in Brakspear pubs this Christmas may now feel that the brewery qualifies as a contender for a "Scrooge" award.

Last July the Oxfordshire brewery offered a bottle of beer a day for a year to anybody who could visit all its 75 pubs in a five-month period. Doubtless Brakspear regarded this as a virtually impossible odyssey. The more hardened drinkers among its customers disagreed. Some organised coach tours to assist them, some did it under their own steam. Dozens acquired the stamped "passport" showing that they had visited all the pubs — when Brakspear called the promotion off. Had the scheme been allowed to run its course hundreds more would probably have qualified.

By October, it seems, Brakspear realised that the offer would lead to it giving more free beer than it had intended and it tried to alter the rules. Now just one person who has visited all the pubs will be entitled to "beer for a year". Others who qualify will only get an umbrella with Brakspear's name on it, and an empty glass.

There is a long history of misguided promotional offers. If Brakspear had done a little more research it might have taken heed of the offer made by some years ago by the Mansfield brewery, which offered a £500 holiday to anyone who visited all of its 196 pubs. It paid for 500 holidays before calling a halt.

Some sales promotion disasters have acquired the status of urban myth. All manufacturers of razors deny they were the one which handed out free samples at football matches.

Hoover's free flights fiasco is far from a myth. The company's attempts to wriggle out of its obligations are well documented. Where customers have taken legal action Hoover has repeatedly had to pay compensation to people refused free flights. Only if people failed to comply with the rules that were in force when they bought their appliance do Hoover have any defence.

There are enough outraged Brakspear customers to assume that one of them will take a test case before the courts, where Brakspear's claim to have changed the rules so as to reduce the availability of prizes will probably receive short shrift.

The cases brought against Hoover have not yet reached a high enough court to set a legal precedent. Instead, the courts will have to take account of a precedent with a much longer pedigree: Carlill v the Carbolic Smoke Ball Company. That 1893 case arose out of the manufacturer's claim that anyone who used their smoke balls would be immune from influenza. So certain was the firm of this claim that it announced that it would pay £100 to anybody let down by this guarantee. Attempts to wriggle out of liability when a Mrs Carlill was afflicted failed.

A binding offer could be made to all the world as well as individuals. The offers made by Brakspear and anyone else making unwise promises are inevitably going to be found to be equally binding.

Richard Colbey is a barrister

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At Christmas, when not a creature is stirring, not even a plumber, who can you turn to for help? IAN WYLIE finds out

Cold Christmas . . . Susan and Christopher Watts' dinner was saved by an electrician
PHOTOGRAPH: FRANCIS BEAUMONT

Time of goodwill and call-out charges

IT IS Christmas morning, but the Yuletide spirit soon evaporates when you wake up to find a that burst pipe has washed away the presents and an electrical fault means the turkey has as much chance of cooking in the freezer as in the oven. What do you do? Whom do you call?

The plumber and electrician sections of the Yellow Pages are your only hope, but nobody is answering telephones today. If you are lucky enough to find a tradesman working during the festive period, you are likely to incur call-out charges of up to £120, and the odds on a visit before the Queen's message are poor.

Christopher and Susan Watts from Broughton, Hampshire were in a similar panic last year when a power failure threatened to wreck their Christmas dinner.

The day would have been lost had the Watts not telephoned Green Flag's Home Assistance Services. Within minutes an electrician returned their call. He offered to come out within the hour, but managed to give them enough advice over the phone for them to repair the fault themselves.

Green Flag's Home Assistance Services offers help with things like plumbing, electricity, glazing, roofing, heating, security and drains. In most cases, Green Flag subcontracts the call-out. It claims the average response time to be under 90 minutes, with three out of four jobs completed inside the hour.

There is a choice of three levels of cover. The basic Home Protector policy restricts cover to replacing broken doors, windows, locks and keys and costs £15.99 per annum. The annual premium for the intermediate Home Assist cover is £72, which offers help to unblock toilets, sinks and showers, fix central heating systems or mend power circuits and cookers. External repairs to leaking roofs, dangerous chimneys and blocked drainpipes are covered by Home Assist Plus, which costs £96 a year.

Call-out charges are included, as are the first £100 for parts and materials. Three hours of free labour are thrown in with Home Protector and Home Assist, while Home Assist Plus covers the first four hours of labour.

RAC Insurance Services offers similar "home breakdown" cover. Its Home Emergency service, which costs £59 per annum, provides help with electrical, plumbing, central heating, hot water, roofing and glazing emergencies. Policyholders must pay for parts and materials.

Some domestic disasters are covered by household insurance policies, and most household insurers now offer emergency helplines to assist with claims-related repairs.

More and more household insurance policies now offer a service — usually run by specialist assistance companies such as Mondial, Gesa or Green Flag — to handle crises that won't necessarily result in an insurance claim.

Lloyds Bank Insurance Services, for example, offers emergency assistance cover as an add-on to its buildings and contents cover. Its 365-days-a-year Home Assistance policy, offered through Mondial, covers problems with plumbing, electricity or gas supplies, glazing, central heating and roofing. Helpline assistance includes medical advice and bereavement counselling. Policyholders can even call out a tree surgeon.

Lloyds has cut the price to £2.95 per month, although the offer finishes at the end of this month. Call-out charges are included, as are the first two hours of labour and £100 worth of materials and parts.

Some insurers, however, offer the same cover as standard within their household policies.

Card issuers set for January credit spree

Cliff Jones

SHOPPERS have hit the high street in force in the run up to Christmas with Mintel forecasting that extra spending over the Christmas period will hit the £7 billion mark.

And banks and building societies are now gearing up for the post-Christmas mayhem of the January sales by cutting their lending rates.

As of New Year's Day, Barclaycard users will be able to take advantage of its new annual percentage rate (APR) of 22.6, which has been cut by a third of a percentage point.

The Co-operative Bank has reduced the rate on its gold Visa card to 11.1 APR. Save & Prosper's base rate card has fallen to 12.1 APR from 12.4 APR. The Co-op Bank will further tempt people to brave the sales when it reduces the rate on its Robert Owen Visa card from 22.4 APR to 21.7 APR on January 2. On that day, First Direct will also reduce the APR on its Visa card from 20.8 to 19.9.

Even so, card rates still remain high, despite a steady drop in other lending rates following this month's cut in bank base rates.

Barclays, which last cut its card rate in January 1994, is to reduce personal loan rates. From Wednesday, customers who take out a Barclayloan of £500 to £2,900 will be charged 20.9 APR instead of the existing 22.9 APR. The interest rate on loans of between £3,000 and £7,400 has been reduced from 18.9 APR to 17.9 APR and the loans of up to £10,000 carry a rate of 14.9 APR instead of 15.9 APR.

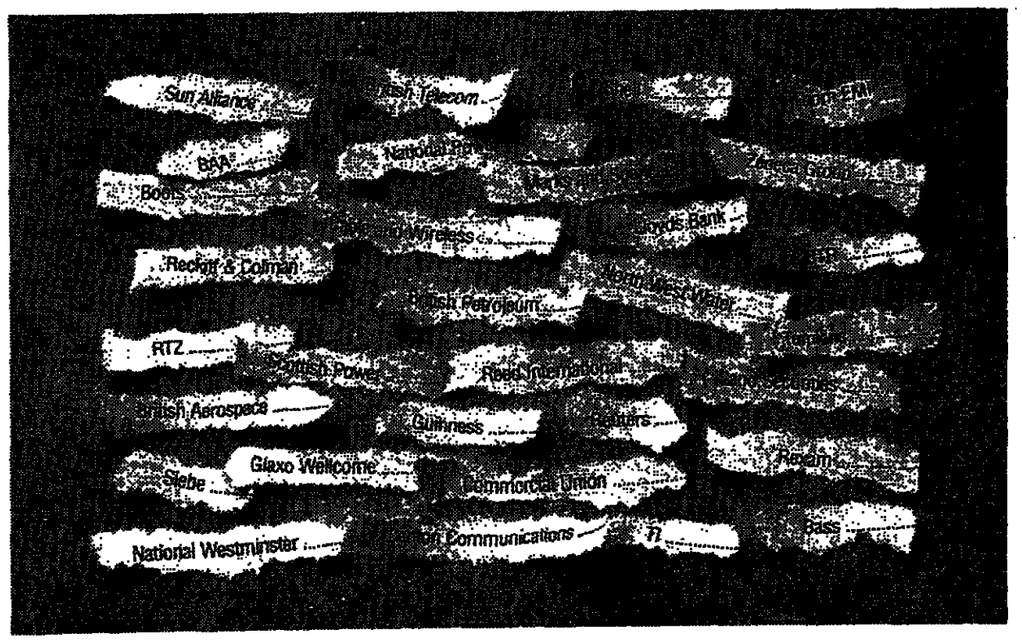
NatWest responded to the Barclayloan cuts by reducing its personal loan rates for the sale season to their lowest level in 16 years. The APR on loans of between £500 and £2,000 remains the same at 18.9, but larger loans have been reduced by 1 per cent from January 2 until the end of Febuary. Loans of £2,100 to £4,000 carry a 15.9 APR and the rate on bigger loans has dropped to 14.9 APR.

NatWest has not reduced the borrowing rates on Access or Visa cards, which are among the highest, 23.4 APR.

Nationwide has cut 1 per cent off rates on loans taken out before January 1. The borrowing rate up to £4,000 is 18.9 APR. The rate for larger loans up to £7,000 is 17.9 APR and loans up to £10,000 will be charged at an APR of 16.9.

Abbey National has also cut rates by up to 1.5 per cent on loans taken out after next Wednesday and before the end of February. During this period, the APR on a £2,000 loan will be 16.9.

Shoppers are warned by credit card insurer Sentinel to guard against theft. It reckons that, before the last weary shopper emerges from the January sales, 5,000 plastic cards will be lost or stolen every day, costing about £10 million.



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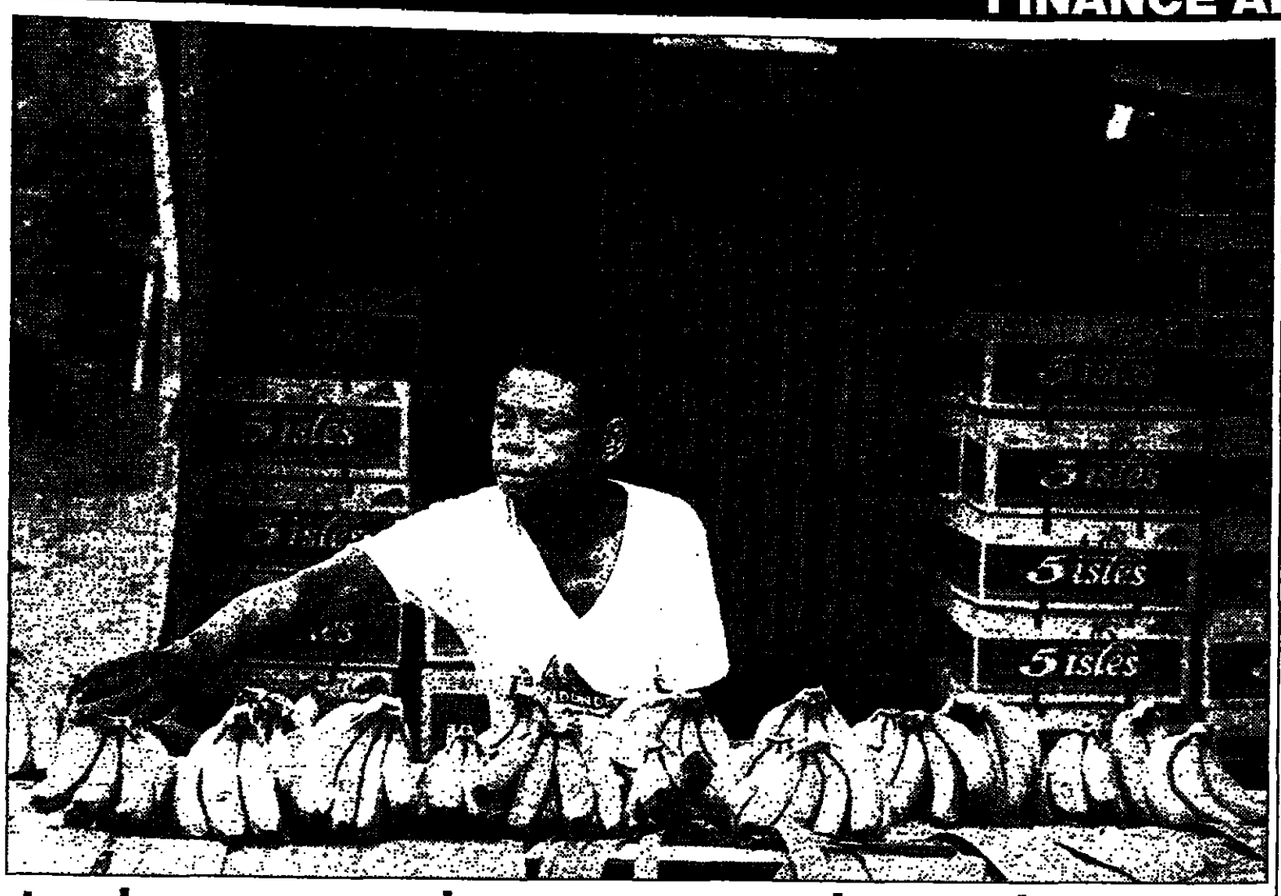
Fyffes and the Windward Islands have taken over a volatile trade at mercy of storms, pests and the EU



Packing up . . . St Lucia was one of Geest's regular weekly banana suppliers
PHOTOGRAPH: PHILIP WOLMUTH

Geest dumps banana business

Roger Cowe

GEEST yesterday sold its bananas business for almost £150 million to a joint venture between arch-rival Fyffes and the Windward Islands, Geest's main supplier.

The sale will be accompanied by a boardroom shake-up which will see the departure of chief executive David Sugden — with a pay-off that is expected to reach up to £500,000.

The board will also lose Stuart Anderson, who remains with the banana business, and Bob Fisher, who had headed the banana operations until recently.

Geest's exit from bananas ends a dismal episode during which it has suffered from storms, pests and the vagaries of the European Union banana regime, which has resulted in surging imports and a supermarket price war which has seen bananas overtake apples as Britain's favourite fruit.

The company has had to issue five profit warnings in the past three years as one crisis after another has sent profits skidding.

Geest chairman, Michael Dowdall, said the company wanted to escape from the volatility of the banana business. "The division has had a volatile performance in recent years and is likely to require greater scale prior to the ending of the existing European banana regime," he said.

Arnhim Eustace, chairman of Fyffe's partner, Wibdeco, said: "The acquisition realises a long-held ambition within the Windward Islands to be involved in the shipping and distribution of our bananas."

Geest's shares soared yesterday because the sale price for the banana business was around £20 million higher than had been expected. But the 39p rise left the shares at only 192p, well below the 1993 peak of 479p.

The company's abandonment of bananas was prompted by the plummeting price of the fruit this autumn, after it had predicted in September that prices would remain flat. This was the last straw, after losses stemming from tropical storms and pests which damaged the crop in Geest's Costa Rica plantation.

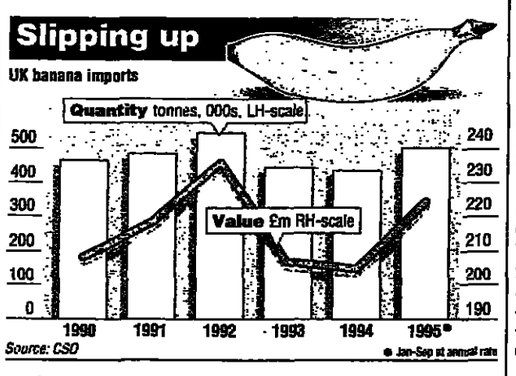
On top of these natural disasters came the EU banana regime, which continued preference for fruit from Europe's former colonies, but nevertheless gave greater access to so-called "dollar bananas" from Central America. The influx of dollar bananas has driven down prices this autumn.

The joint-venture partners will pay Geest a total of £147.5 million, with each subscribing £20 million in shares and the balance made up of loans. The Windward Islands government will guarantee Wibdeco's contribution.

Fyffes chairman Neil McCann said yesterday: "We are delighted in having been successful in acquiring the banana business. We believe this marks the beginning of a long and successful relationship with Wibdeco."

Fyffes said that the Geest business would be run at arms length from its existing operations, but it also said it would benefit from a closer trading relationship with Wibdeco and from the greater scale of its European business.

The joint venture is expected to recoup a substantial part of the purchase price by selling the disastrous Costa Rica plantation and Geest's two ships, which are chartered to other operators.



Geest aims to concentrate on its fresh convenience foods business, which supplies supermarkets with salads, dips, soup, pasta dishes, bread and pizza. This business has produced consistent growth in recent years and was responsible for 40 per cent of Geest's profits last year.

Now that the poisoned pill of bananas has been removed Geest is thought likely to be a takeover target for other food companies.

SFO pursues small swindlers

Dan Atkinson

A SHIFT in strategy, towards smaller cases in the provinces and away from big "glamour" prosecutions in London, has pushed up the workload of the Serious Fraud Office by 30 per cent. Swindlers in the regions will find no place to hide, an SFO source suggested last night.

Director George Staple yesterday marked the first anniversary of Guinness convict Ernest Saunders's reference back to the Court of Appeal — a move seen at the time as catastrophic for the SFO — with an end-of-year statement highlighting the changing nature of the anti-fraud strike force.

Not only did the Lord Chief Justice, Lord Taylor, and his fellow judges throw out the appeals of Mr Saunders, Gerald Ronson, Anthony Parnes and Jack Lyons, but the SFO, by lowering from £5 million to £1 million the threshold at which it will investigate fraud, has turned up the heat on bent solicitors, rogue businessmen and other fraudsters across the country.

"The number of cases being dealt with by the office has increased by 30 per cent, from 50 to 65, in just nine months," Mr Staple said. "All the indications are that our workload will continue to rise substantially."

In part, the change in emphasis was triggered by the Davie Committee's report into the SFO's future, which recommended a lower trigger point for office inquiries. Now the SFO can pursue more smaller fraudsters with its talk-or-else Section 2 powers, under which suspects do not have the right to silence.

Co-operation with county and regional constabularies has grown with cases including Legal Aid fraud and a classic "long-firm" con, in which a bogus business borrowed a large amount of money and disappeared.

The office is recruiting extra staff to cope with the heavier workload. Interviews are under way for a dozen more financial investigators, and other staff levels will increase slightly.

Meanwhile, since February, Parliament has allowed Section 2 powers to be used at the request of foreign agencies investigating fraud. Since this change, 19 requests have been received, 31 Section 2 notices have been issued and seven searches carried out.

Mr Staple said: "All the indications are that demand for use of these powers will increase further." The office emphasised that all foreign requests have to be cleared by the Home Office.

Risk of longer prison sentence forces Leeson to reconsider appeal

Pauline Springett

NICK LEESON, the former trader whose £860 million losses brought down Barings Bank, is seriously considering abandoning an appeal against any of his six-and-a-half year jail sentence in Singapore.

Leeson's lawyers said yesterday there was a very real risk that an appeal would result in the sentence being increased by a year to seven and a half years.

The Leeson team may consider an appeal particularly risky in the light of predictions by legal experts that Leeson might serve only three and a half to four years if he gets remission for good behaviour.

John Koh, Leeson's Singapore lawyer, is studying the trial judge's written reasons for the sentence and must decide by December 30 whether or not to proceed with an appeal. An announcement is expected next week.

"He's going to take the Christmas holidays to review the document and then see Nick Leeson about it," said a spokeswoman for Mr Koh.

Leeson, 28, was originally charged with 11 counts of fraud and forgery but, in an apparent plea bargain, the prosecution proceeded with only two charges of cheating. Leeson was sentenced on December 2 but subsequently lodged a notice of appeal against the six-year sentence on one of the charges.

Mercury supports Oftel against BT

Nicholas Bannister
Technology Editor

THE BRUISING battle between British Telecom and Oftel, the industry regulator, intensified yesterday when Mercury nailed its colours to the regulator's mast, leaving Britain's biggest phone company to fight a lone battle over radical changes to licences.

Mercury welcomed Oftel's proposal to alter its licence to include a general ban on anti-competitive behaviour in return for the promise of reduced regulation of its operations.

On Thursday BT vehemently opposed a similar change to its licence, claiming that it gave the regulator sweeping new powers over its business and failed to provide certainty about what constituted anti-competitive behaviour.

A Mercury spokesman said: "We fully support the idea of getting rid of a lot of details, obligations and regulations in our licence. For example, we are only allowed to offer services to an oil rig so long as it is stationary. We have to stop if it is towed anywhere.

"We equally support the principle of a general licence condition designed to curb and deter anti-competitive behaviour."

However, Mercury is contesting Oftel's claim that controls over its international business must remain in place because only Mercury and BT are allowed to handle such business in the UK. It believes the ban on anti-competitive practices makes the controls unnecessary.

● Rod Olsen, the Cable and Wireless finance director due to become acting chief executive in the new year, has been appointed chairman of Mercury, the group's UK phone subsidiary, with Stephen Pettit as deputy chairman. The posts became vacant after C&W's chairman, Lord Young, and chief executive, James Ross, were sacked.

Notebook

Finding way back to Bretton Woods

Alex Brummer

AMONG the myriad of holiday greetings received here in recent days, only one was really touching. This was not because of the beauty of the design or the sumptuous contents but the quality of the message.

In keeping with the spirit of the season, it casts some bright light on a pressing agenda only too easily lost in the fog of brandy fumes and glistening gifts. It is a lonely cry from an official working high up in the Japanese Research Institute: he laments that the politicians and Bretton Woods institutions no longer seem interested in values which led to their creation just over half a century ago.

"In order to save our children, and our children's children from contaminated oceans, from poisoned fish and other marine products, to keep the air clean, and indeed practically save the whole universe from environmental devastations caused by nuclear oubursts", action is needed to strengthen the monetary organisations. This means providing resources to the new democracies of eastern Europe and South-east Asia. And, by extension, dealing with the huge unfinished complex of development assistance issues which were left in abeyance when finance ministers from around the world last focused on them as the Washington foliage turned golden and russet in early October.

There is a tendency in the development universe now to concentrate so much attention on the crisis of the moment — Bosnia, supporting the Palestinian peace, putting Rwanda back together again — that the more prosaic work receives less attention.

Clearly, it is important for the World Bank's self-image as a relevant institution — after a long period of negative attention — that it is seen to be acting with some urgency to provide economic advice and co-ordinate funds to support newly forged peace accords. The creation of an emergency $500 million fund, to finance priority needs in the first quarter of 1996, is useful. The real difficulty, as with all such emergency aid programmes, is sustaining development flows after the initial enthusiasm of the backers of peace has started to ebb.

THE ability of the World Bank and the IMF to sustain the needs of not just Bosnia but a range of the poorest developing countries will be dependent upon some leadership from western finance ministers. This means addressing with real urgency several outstanding matters: new resources for the International Development Association (IDA); multilateral debt forgiveness for the poorest nations and the interrelated question of providing more funds to recycle and perhaps wipe out the IMF's lending to poorer countries to encourage macro-economic reforms.

First, the IDA, which if it is properly funded for a further three years from July 1996 will have the burden of providing aid flows to Bosnia together with the poorer Asian republics of the former Soviet Union as well as its traditional African and Indian sub-continent client list. The IDA has been in trouble as a result of parsimony in the US Congress, which is still some $935 million in arrears in the current round. Even without US support, though, donor countries have broadly agreed to push ahead with a $14.3 billion arrangement for 1996-99 (some $6 billion less than last time) which is going to mean a rearrangement of priorities and a culling of recipients. The most vulnerable in this exercise will be China and India.

Most important will be to ensure that Africa slips no further below the poverty line and that new obligations in Gaza and the West Bank, and Bosnia are not neglected. But it will also be important in 1996 to ensure that the US, having cut itself out of the IDA for the time being, does not stand in the way of Japan becoming the largest shareholder or feel that it has permanently escaped from a budget obligation.

Second, as important to the most indebted poor countries, like Uganda, will be the progress made on the plan, encouraged by World Bank president James Wolfensohn, for a mutilateral debt-forgiveness programme. The volume of debt has been put at $11 billion, of which the greatest part will have to be repaid over the next 15 years. This debate has assumed almost mythical proportions in the development community, because it has been seen by leading voluntary aid agencies such as Oxfam as the biggest obstacle to economic progress.

CRITICISM of the debt-reduction scheme has revolved around issues of financial probity. It has been argued that the forgiveness would undermine the credit ratings of the Bank, thus raising the cost of its funding for the vast majority of borrowers. Moreover, it might lead to moral hazard in that countries will borrow more than they are able to repay, in the belief that future loans also will be cut back.

It is these problems, together with a number of more technical issues, which have engaged the IMF and World Bank since the issue was first raised in October. Indeed, despite intense discussions between the Bretton Woods institutions, progress has been lamentably slow. Fortunately, finance ministers have set a deadline. The idea is that a proposal will have been appoved by the executive directors of both the World Bank and IMF in time for the next session of the Development Committee, which will be held in Washington on April 23.

If ministers can bring themselves to agree to the proposal, and there must be serious doubts about Theo Waigel of Germany, who takes a fundamentalist view on the financial credibility of the Bretton Woods institutions, a more formal proposal can go to the Group of Seven heads of government, who meet in Lyons in July. If that timetable can be met it will be a huge stride in debt alleviation. The final component, easing the stress on the least well-off countries, will be a lifting of the restrictions on IMF gold sales so that the Fund's lines of credit to almost the same group of injured countries can be extended/recycled.

This may seem an expensive agenda for more wealthy countries in these budgetarily austere times. But thriving new markets, as has been seen in East Asia, can bring light to everyone.

News in brief

Broadgate buy is completed

British Land Co yesterday exchanged contracts to buy the remaining 50 per cent in Broadgate Properties which it does not already own, for a maximum total cash consideration of £121.5 million. It said the transaction, which is conditional on the approval of British Land's shareholders, is expected to be completed on January 15.

Water mark

The European Commission has cleared Lyonnaise des Eaux to take over Northumbrian Water. The combined group would hold two of about 30 licences for water supply in England and Wales, representing 8 per cent of water customers and 6.3 per cent of sewerage services, it said.

Natwest move

NatWest Bank's highest-paid director, John Tugwell, who earned £1.5 million last year, has resigned from the board to become president and chief executive officer of Fleet National Bank of New York on completion of the sale of NatWest Bancorp to Fleet Financial Group.

Japan's banks say bad debt rule is driving them to ruin

Kevin Rafferty in Tokyo

THE heads of big Japanese banks yesterday accused the ministry of finance of driving them to ruin by trying to force them to bear the bulk of the bad debts of seven bankrupt housing loan associations.

Having already been forced to accept 3,500 billion yen (£23 billion) of the primary losses totalling 6,400 billion yen, the banks have been told they must be prepared to mop up secondary losses too — between 50 and 100 per cent of the primary losses, according to pessimists.

Toru Hashimoto, president of Fuji Bank and chairman of the federation of Japanese bankers' associations, has already drawn the line in the sand, saying that the big banks have paid enough and that if they accept any more liabilities they face suits from aggrieved shareholders for bad management of the banks' funds.

Another leading banker spluttered angrily: "The ministry of finance is supposed to be responsible for the soundness of the banking system, but it seems to be doing everything it can to ruin us."

The bankers are doubly angry because the politically powerful agricultural cooperatives that provided much of the funds that fuelled the housing associations' ill-advised spending spree during the years of the "bubble economy" of the late 1980s "are getting away virtually scot-free, paying for just 530 billion yen of their mistakes", according to a senior manager of one of Japan's biggest banks.

Toyoo Gyohten, chairman of Bank of Tokyo and formerly the top international bureaucrat at the finance ministry, yesterday joined in the chorus of criticism, saying that if the ministry "continues this kind of thing, the era may come again when Japanese young people could start to riot".

He was expressing worries about the ministry's failure to get the economy moving, which is causing alarm over rising unemployment among the young.

Finance minister Masayoshi Takemura yesterday tried to defend the scheme, saying that the financial crisis threatened both savings and the economy itself.

Three chairs for the mandarins keen to make a big impression

John Glover in Milan

IN CASH-STRAPPED Britain the deputy prime minister spends a fortune on a desk system to celebrate his final ascent to greatness. But in Italy, a by-word for profligate bribes, even the highest and lowest civil servant's desks cannot escape spending cuts.

There, Lamberto Dini's government, which is looking for an extra 5.7 trillion lire (£2.2 billion) to help close the budget deficit, has come up with the ploy of desk-downsizing. A 100-page decree from Italy's treasury ministry, published in the Official Gazette, sets out the size of desks that will, in future, grace government offices. It will bring savings of up to 30 per cent on the government's furniture bill.

Top-ranking bureaucrats — *dirigenti* — will have to make do with desks 1.8 metres long and 90cm wide, a far cry from the magnificent pieces their offices currently feature. The desks in the offices of the *funzionari*, one rung below, will stay at 1.6 metres by 80cm.

But, although the new regulations maintain the status differential between the top two positions on the greasy pole, the gap between rungs two and three is to disappear. Clerks, too, will be allowed desks 1.6 metres by 80cm.

At the top, desks are to be of chestnut or teak. The mid-level officials will have veneer and clerks, while enjoying desks of the same size, will have to make do with plywood.

The wide-ranging reform is not confined to desks — all government office furniture is involved. While from now on it may be hard for members of the public to guess the rank of the bureaucrat facing them from the size of his desk, his chair will give the game away.

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Cyprus 0.695	India 53.83	Norway 9.56	Switzerland 1.725
Denmark 8.37	Ireland 0.85	Portugal 228.00	Turkey 84.779
Finland 6.65	Israel 4.90	Saudi Arabia 5.75	USA 1.5050

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Next week: Is your present economically rational?

Will Hutton ponders the irrationality of Christmas gifts on the Economics Page next Wednesday while Dan Atkinson's Worm's Eye argues that 1996 should be Anti-Business Year. Vic Keegan's Notebook and a full news service return on Thursday. In common with other editions of British newspapers printed and distributed from Frankfurt, International Guardian will not be published on New Year's Day.

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Yes, Geest has no bananas, page 23

Say no to call-out charges, page 22

Downsizing hits desk jockeys, page 23

Financial Editor: Alex Brummer
Telephone: 0171-239-9610
Fax: 0171-833-4456

Finance Guardian

The script for 1995 had Ken Clarke fixing the recovery. Nobody expected a derivatives dealer to be the villain. DAN ATKINSON looks back in bemusement

TW3 . . . It was the year of the Ken and Eddie show, when their exchanges over interest rates became an exercise in open government; of Nick Leeson being frogmarched from airport to court to jail in Singapore and his wife Lisa at the Downing Street gates standing by her man; of Bill Gates running the publicity campaign to end all publicity campaigns for Windows 95; of the Halifax, futuristic headquarters plonked among the terraced houses and all, mega-merging with Tyke rival the Leeds Permanent; of water for Yorkshire being delivered by road convoy while to be a director of a privatised utility was to be Public Enemy No 1

PHOTOMONTAGE: LESLIE McCARTHY

The year Nick lived dangerously

THE Royal Air Force has developed the unfortunate habit of declaring the previous night's sorties to have been 100 per cent successful, adding that the enemy will be lucky to stay in the game until the end of the week. Only later does it emerge that half the bombs missed their targets.

To live through 1995 was to experience a similar shouting of the odds prior to knowledge of the form; the economy was going absolutely swimmingly . . . until the hard data came in, when it transpired that it wasn't. Yet so many hopes had been invested in Year Three (nay, Year Four) of the "recovery" that anyone pointing to the awful truth risked, at the very least, an on-air earwigging for "talking Britain down" from Michael Heseltine.

It was rather like the plot of a crime-caper-going-wrong film. The great turnaround year 1995 that was to restore consumer confidence, eliminate negative equity, build on the "recovery" and put the Government back on course for re-election, was in permanent conflict with the year as it really was. And if 1995 resembled a comedy-crime caper, its main character was without doubt Nicholas William Leeson, the 28-year-old plasterer's son from Watford who opened the year as an unknown speculator and ended it as a world-famous convict beginning a 6½-year prison sentence.

Leeson wandered through 1995 like a ghostly refugee from the 1980s: after news broke in late February that his wild gambles had brought the venerable Barings Bank to its knees, a disbelieving nation followed his flight through Malaya to Brunei to Frankfurt, his vain attempts to reach Britain and his eventual extradition to Singapore.

Wherever he wandered, Leeson knocked over one nostrum after another. Bank of England demands for "greater independence" looked a little sick after its failure to spot the imminent collapse; the claim that Britain's future lay "on the Pacific Rim" took on a new meaning after Leeson's near-£1 billion worth of sour Far Eastern bets came to light, and the sale of bankrupt Barings to ING of the Netherlands for £1 seemed to bring the curtain down on that 1980s grand opera "London as world financial capital".

Indeed, by the year's end there was scarcely a famous City name still in British hands. SG Warburg went to Swiss Bank Corporation in May, and in July Kleinwort was bought by Dresdner Bank of Germany. Smith New Court fell to Merrill Lynch of the US in the summer.

The high street banks seemed determine to outdo each other in redundancies. In early April, union leaders sought clarification of a prediction by Sir Brian Pitman, chief executive of Lloyds Bank, that one in five jobs were set to disappear on top of the 100,000 lost since the late 1980s. Barclays staff struck twice, in May and June.

JUST as Leeson was being cited as proof of the sickness of the Anglo-Saxon system, Japan's Daiwa Bank admitted that its very own rogue trader, Toshihide Iguchi, had lost £700 million on US bonds.

The Year of Going Wrong was punctuated by the crash of mighty oaks in the forest. Three days into the new year, Maurice Saatchi, deposed chairman of the eponymous advertising agency, severed all links with Saatchi & Saatchi. He founded the New Saatchi agency and waltzed off with clients including British Airways and Qantas.

Mick Newmarch enjoyed precisely 23 days of the new year as chief executive of the Pru; he quit, complaining that the financial services industry's regulators had put him in an impossible position.

March saw the last exit of maverick tycoon Tiny Rowland from the Lonrho trading group. He tried to force directors to install him as president, but his once greatest fans — Lonrho's small shareholders — helped to throw out the proposal.

And just as Lloyd's of London was hoping for a little stability, chief executive Peter Middleton slung his hook on November 15 to join the US investment house, Salomon Brothers. On November 21, a key figure in the great "enterprise" mythology of our time, Lord Young, was asked to leave the chair of once-placid Cable and Wireless. He had engaged in open warfare with chief executive James Ross, also invited to quit.

BUT the biggest scalp of all was taken early in the year, in the "Bonk of England" affair. Deputy governor Rupert Pennant-Rea resigned in March after his former-mistress, Mary Ellen Synon, went public with details of their relationship, including indiscretions in Governor Eddie George's dressing room.

The Year of Going Wrong treated some better than others. True, Cedric Brown and his fellow British Gas directors suffered shareholder opprobrium regarding their eye-popping pay packets, and National Grid chiefs had their arms twisted by Energy Minister Tim Eggar, who wanted them to forgo their entitlement to a £4 million pay-and-perks deal (they refused). The £15 billion-worth of takeover bids in the utilities sector must have consoled power and water bosses with the feeling that somebody loved them.

This buying spree formed part of a record wave of takeovers topping £66 billion, reminiscent of the glory days of the 1980s. But the difference this time was that few bothered to pretend that the merger mania had anything much to do with "synergy" or "creating world-class players". When Glaxo swallowed Wellcome for £9.1 billion, and Lloyds Bank took TSB, observers waited for the first wave of job losses. And as the year drew to a close with Granada's £3.4 billion bid for Forte, it was hard to find anyone who imagined that success would lead to a night's stay in a Forte hotel becoming a more (or less) agreeable experience.

Not that any of this mattered to the stock market, which, displaying its usual fidelity to the real economy, recorded a 20 per cent return in equities, ranking 1995 as seventh out of the past 20 years. And in two areas, there was a return to the "bubble-stock" mania of the mid-1980s. Commercial radio, progressively decontrolled by the Government, boomed in apparent defiance of every law of supply and demand. As new frequencies were "freed up", new stations sprouted and new listeners were recruited.

The other market bubble was computer technology, with smaller companies riding on the back of the ludicrous puffery that surrounded the launch in August of Microsoft's Windows 95 software.

The principle of "mutuality" headed for the history books: in August, the Halifax and Leeds building societies merged prior to a share float, and Cheltenham & Gloucester joined Lloyds Bank.

One high-profile victim of the year was Kenneth Clarke, the Chancellor. In a going-according-to-plan 1995, this would have been his triumphant year. Memories of the 1993 tax increases would fade as sacrifices began to pay off and a new glow of prosperity, reminiscent of Ready Brek advertisements, suffused the British people.

But the 1995 effect scuppered this, as so much else. Blustery February opened with a 0.5 per cent base-rate increase to 6.75 per cent, the third rise in five months. Upward-moving commodity prices were blamed.

A MONTH later, Mr Clarke was in trouble after citing the Consett steelworks, closed 15 years previously, as one of the country's most efficient. He repeated this party piece by praising the endeavours of a nappy factory which had been modernised (ie closed) in 1991.

True, Mr Clarke enjoyed one shining hour in 1995. He told Eddie George to shove off in May, when the latter suggested that a further rate rise was just the ticket to keep "recovery" on the road. One month later, the Chancellor was vindicated. Sad to say, the data supporting his vindication — showing falling factory production, mortgage lending and volumes of goods sold in shops — underlined the ghastly truth about the "recovery".

Against this background, the Chancellor's 1995 staggered to its climax: the November 28 Budget. In the scenario, this was The Big One, not so much a Budget as a fruit-machine. In the real world, the room for manoeuvre was so tight that the big BIG tax cut amounted to . . . one penny in the pound.

Given the way the great turnaround year actually turned out, few were predicting anything very cheery for 1996. After The Year of Going Wrong, maybe this would be merely a year of hanging on, in the hope of some eventual upturn in fortunes.

As with Prisoner Leeson, perhaps good behaviour will earn us all some remission.

Putting on the spin

What do the facts show? Recklessness. Our client is not a crook — John Koh, Nick Leeson's Singapore lawyer in defence speech

As stupid as it may sound, none of this is really real money — Nick Leeson to David Frost

Boy, does he have some skeletons — Mary Ellen Synon, scorned lover of Rupert Pennant-Rea

Many good people in the commercial world are put off by the tabloid intrusion into the private lives of those in public positions. After the events of the past few days, this reluctance to move will increase — Rupert Pennant-Rea's letter of resignation

We have cut taxes, we are cutting taxes. When we can afford it and it is in the interests of the economy, we will cut taxes again — Kenneth Clarke's Budget speech

If this Budget was supposed to relaunch the Conservative party, it will fail — Tony Blair's response

What has to happen is a sharing of the pain — Sir Alastair Morton, Eurotunnel chairman, after banks froze interest payments on £8 billion loans

There's been more strategy in Forte in the last 10 days than in the last 10 years — Gerry Robinson, Granada chief executive, asking Takeover Panel to block 'trophy hotel' sales

This has been cobbled together on the back of an envelope — Rocco Forte rejecting £3.4 billion bid for group built by his father

Package tour by roundabout route

20

Roger Cowe

IT MAY be a load of old rubbish, all those discarded boxes and wrapping paper spilling from your bulging dustbins next week. But just think. In five years' time Britain might have a proper infrastructure for recycling this useful material.

Or at least half of it. That's all that is required under, yes, a European Union packaging directive that is driving Britain reluctantly and belatedly in the wake of our continental neighbours.

The delay in getting to grips with this very visible environmental issue is not because the Government is reluctant to address it. In the 1990 white paper This Common Inheritance, ministers said industry should work to reduce packaging.

But while the desire for action has been evident, the will to make something happen has not. John Gummer, the Environment Secretary, passed the buck to industry. In 1993 he summoned an ad-hoc group of company bosses from retailers, companies which became known as packer/fillers and the manufacturers of packaging material. He told them to come up with a "voluntary" plan to meet the EU targets.

Individually, industrialists are generally very good at working out how to meet targets. It is what they do for a living. A group of industrialists is a different matter, however, unless they have genuine common interests.

So the Producer Responsibility Group which had been charged with developing a voluntary scheme eventually had to admit defeat, in the face of £100 million projected costs and mutual mistrust about who would end up paying the bill.

Mr Gummer had to admit defeat as well, reluctantly accepting that there would have to be legal backing for Britain's recycling effort.

That didn't help much, however, because then the PRG had to work out how to apportion the legal responsibility, as well as the cost.

One deadline after another passed, with the manufacturers falling out with the retailers, and the retailers with each other. An eminent arbitrator, Sir Sidney Lipworth, was called in, to little effect.

This year the group, which had become V-WRAG, presented Mr Gummer with six options, none of which had anything approaching universal industry support. At the last minute, surprise, surprise, a seventh option was added, which was supposed to be a compromise but which also did not command widespread support.

Finally, last week, heads were banged together and Mr Gummer ended up with something that can form the basis of regulations to be presented to Parliament in the new year.

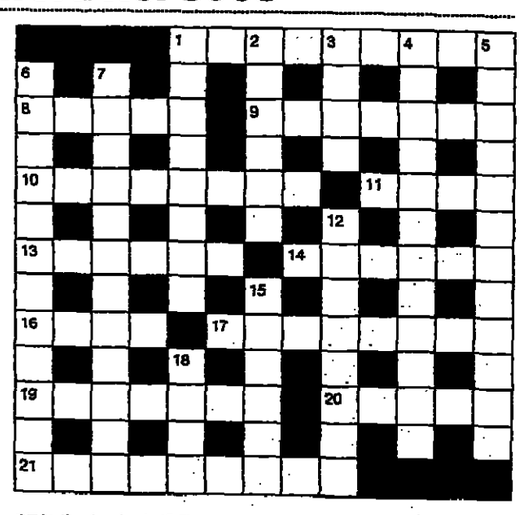
A huge sigh of relief, then, for all concerned. Except that these three years have done nothing to increase the quantity of packaging recycled. Only now can Valpak, the industry body which has to organise the system, get round to thinking about the logistics of collection and the means of encouraging markets for recycled materials.

Worse still, nobody seems to have remembered that the whole point of the exercise was to be the reduction of packaging waste.

In a report this week, Friends of the Earth cited this case as evidence that voluntarism leads to less chance of achieving government objectives. But at least your dustbin might be made of recycled plastic.

Quick Crossword No. 8005

Solution No. 8004



Stocking filler! Guardian Quick Crossword Book 3 (Penguin) now out, £3.99 from bookshops. Books 1 and 2 also available, same price.

Across

1 Forerunner (9)
8 Avoid (5)
9 Local way of speaking (7)
10 Blameless (8)
11 Dimensions — sticky stuff (4)
13 Humble oneself (6)
14 Stimulus (6)
16 Jot (4)
17 In the fresh air (2,6)
19 Stately hymn tune (7)
20 (Music) having an established key (5)
21 Got by distillation (9)

Down

1 Clergyman (8)
2 Close — finish (6)
3 US state settled by Mormons (4)
4 I slip in cages (anagram) (12)
5 Quite unwell (6,6)
6 Needlework group (6,6)
7 Freshwater food fish (7,5)
12 Settled abroad (8)
15 Even if (6)
18 Senile (4)

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Registered as a newspaper at the Post Office ISSN 0261-3077

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